

Let's meet at Lake Mansfield

The newsletter of Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA)

Spring 2015



Lake Mansfield Alliance is a project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

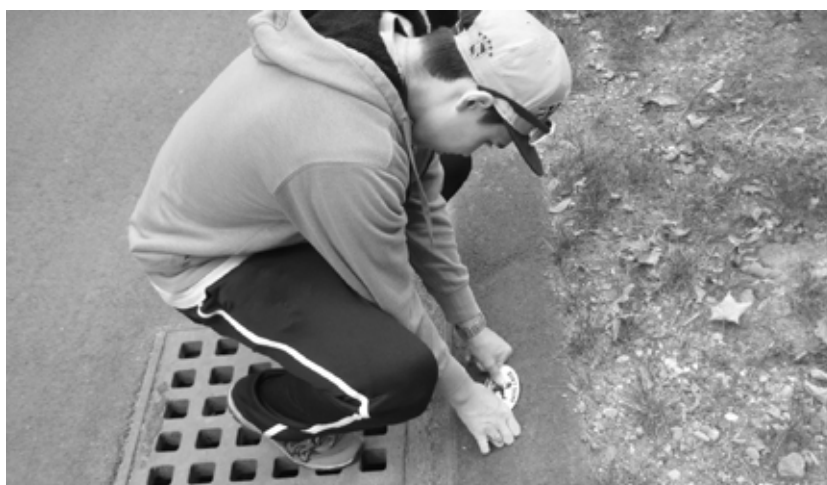
SEE INSIDE

LM Water Quality Program	2
Be Involved	3
Select Bd. Supports Funds for LM	4
Summer Fun	6
Fishing Derby	
Swimming Lessons	
Summer Yoga	
Some of the Best Things are Free	7
Changing Rooms	
New Trail Signs	
The Woods are Alive	8
Donation of Boat Launch	9

Planning Pays Off

This has been a tremendous year for Lake Mansfield. Strong planning has led to great progress: a new changing area has been installed, and the Massachusetts Environmental Fund is funding our Water Quality Program. Soon the town will vote on allocating funds for the professional planning and community input meetings needed to solve long-term problems, involving the care of the resource area and improvement of Lake Mansfield Road. We need your support! Your input, volunteer hours and donations are essential to our successful stewardship efforts.

Christine Ward, LMA Coordinator



Students from Simon's Rock College lend a hand.

2015 LAKE MANSFIELD EVENTS

Sunday May 17th 10:30am-3pm

Lake Mansfield Celebration and Clean-Up Day

Annual Fishing Derby Sunday June 7th

Hosted by Berkshire South Regional Community Ct.
Call: 528-2810

Summer Lifeguards 11:30AM-5:30PM

Beginning on Memorial Day Weekend
Provided every day during school vacation

Children's Swim Lessons

Session 1: July 2-23 Tuesday & Thursday
Session 2: July 28-August 18. Tuesday & Thursday
Free to Great Barrington residents
Provided by GB Parks and Recreation
To register call Berkshire South: 528-2810.

Summer Yoga in July

Mon, Weds & Friday 8-9 am
\$10 per class, a portion of proceeds to go to LMA

License Plate Revenues Fund LM Water Quality Program

Chris Rembold, Great Barrington Town Planner



Samples are collected at several lake sites.

Last year saw the launch of an exciting new water quality initiative at Lake Mansfield. Funded by the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, a water quality monitoring program involving the Town, Bard College at Simon's Rock, the Berkshire Environmental Research Center (BERC), and Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA) has begun.

The two-year program will analyze the water quality and chemistry in Lake Mansfield over two years and will quantify the impacts of non-point source pollution and stormwater runoff entering the lake. This effort follows the Town's recent work on stormwater improvements in the lake watershed, such as the Castle Hill Avenue stormwater project. The study is meant to evaluate the success of recent improvements and inform future work in the watershed. It will also engage students at the college in scientific research.

The program calls for samples to be taken from sites around the lake on a monthly basis and after significant storm events. Beginning this past winter, students and BERC staff braved the cold winter temperatures, drilled through the 18-inch thick ice with their augur, and collected samples for analysis at the lab. They test for temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen levels, conductivity, dissolved solids, suspended solids and a variety of other parameters.

BERC Director Dr. Thomas Coote helped design the program. He said the different sampling sites—near the road, the beach, the Castle Hill Avenue drainage, and the undisturbed forest that Simon's Rock owns—have different characteristics. Overall, they will provide a comprehensive picture of how the lake is impacted by runoff.

The program is a great example of resources working together. Students get valuable research opportunities, and the Town will get



Dr. Coote test water at outlet.



Students participate in 2 year WaterQuality testing.

usable water quality data. Simon's Rock students conduct the field work and research in classes and through internships under the technical and scientific direction of BERC, a nonprofit organization at the college that provides research opportunities for its undergraduates. The Town provides administrative oversight. Simon's Rock provides the use of laboratories, supplies, field equipment. And LMA provides outreach and publicity to the community.

We'll keep you updated on the research findings. In the meantime, if you see these earnest students taking water samples, offer a heartfelt "thank you!" and wish them well in their work.



The Massachusetts Environmental Trust is funded through the sale of three specialty license plates – the Northern Right Whale, Leaping Brook Trout, and Blackstone Valley Mill. Anyone can support this important conservation program by choosing one of these license plates when registering their car or renewing the registration. Those wanting more information on the license plate program can visit www.mass.gov/eea/met or the Registry of Motor Vehicles at www.massrmv.com.

Be Involved

Stay informed and share your ideas. You can view Lake Mansfield studies, documents, and power points at http://www.townofgb.org/Pages/GBarringtonMA_LMITF/index. To receive timely updates, including meeting announcements, join our LMA email group: info@lakemansfield.org. Send along your questions or suggestions.

Your vote makes a difference. Attend Town Meeting to support this year's proposed expenditure for Lake Mansfield Recreation Area Planning: Monday May 4th (6pm Monument Mountain High School).

Pitch in! Come to our Annual Lake Mansfield Clean-up and Celebration Day. Each year "lake-minded" folks get together to spruce up our beach area and forest trails for the coming season. This is a great way to meet neighbors, hear the latest news, and be engaged in caring for our special environment.

Enjoy! The lake and forest offer beauty, recreation, connection, and inspiration. Go alone, bring a friend, walk, run, swim, fish, paddle or just sit! This community space is here for all. www.lakemansfield.org



Berkshire School students spruce up trail kiosks.

Select Board Supports Planning Funds for Lake Mansfield

Christine Ward

In 2014, the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force, including representatives from LMA, grappled with the complex issues of habitat protection, recreational access and a rapidly deteriorating Lake Mansfield Road. Last spring the Task Force reviewed road recommendations put forward by engineers from Tighe & Bond. The report gave the clearest explanation for Lake Mansfield Road degradation yet received: The road base is not adequately built to accommodate the changing water levels inherent in this lakeside space. Annual freezing and thawing cracks the road surface, especially in the multiple areas where culverts exist. The current road is destined to fall apart, and the erosion of the bank area will continue if not remediated. To correct this situation and to provide for a long term solution, the report described alternative scenarios for the construction of a new road bed. Price tags for these early estimates ranged from \$600,000 to \$1.1 million.

In an effort to clearly understand the options provided by Tighe and Bond, the Task Force hosted a site visit



Improvement options weighed at spring 2014 site visit.



Annual freezing and thawing = safety concerns and road deterioration.

on May 21, 2014. Attending were representatives of the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Select Board and Parks Commission, and the Town Planner. To clarify the special permitting required and to help inform possible solutions, the Department of Environmental Protection circuit rider and a Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Senior Planner were also present. The site visit resulted in a heightened awareness of the complexities of repair and necessity of a comprehensive and coordinated approach. Several layers of protection must be considered before any option can be selected. All work, except routine paving, will require review by the Conservation Commission, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species, and Army Corps of Engineers. The feasibility and cost of proposed options are directly related to environmental impact and permitting requirements. Solutions for the LM Recreation Area must also support recreational use, public safety and community access.

The Select Board hosted a joint committee meeting in September where the Task Force gave a presentation highlighting current conditions and possible solutions for Lake Mansfield. Along with the special permitting requirements, safety and multi-use aspects were addressed. Conscientious planning necessitates that best practices be supported and costs be clearly defined. The meeting was well attended. Select Board and town committee members gained a clearer understanding of the complexities inherent in providing for future care of the LM Recreation Area.

A \$40,000 request for spending has included in this year's proposed capital budget to hire a consultant team to develop detailed cost estimates for the different phases (design, construction, permitting) of future capital improvements in the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area. The Task Force submitted a formal request and comprehensive report urging the Select Board to support this expenditure: "We recommend that a consultant team with expertise in landscape architecture, environmental permitting, natural resource evaluation, engineering, cost estimating, and capital improvement planning be hired to inform the next improvement choices and decisions. Investment in planning is the best way to support the community in caring for the Lake Mansfield Recreation area and to ensure continued community benefits in the most informed and economically responsible way ... Community input meetings, presentation of improvement options and community decision-making meetings will be required. In the interim, short term solutions for the repair of the degraded Lake Mansfield Road should also be addressed." While much work has been done to protect and improve this area the current challenges are extremely complex and future efforts will depend on the community's priorities.

On March 9, 2014 the Select Board voted unanimously to support this expenditure, and Select Board member Dan Bailly complimented the Task Force on its diligence and consistent efforts to involve the community in the process. The Finance Committee included the request in its budget recommendations. These funds for Lake Mansfield are dependent upon voter approval at this year's Town Meeting. Voter approval will show the clearest community commitment to the preservation of the Lake Mansfield Recreation area to date. To support this work, plan to attend MAY 4th Town Meeting.

Summer Fun

Laura Harner,
Berkshire South Regional Community Center

Fishing Derby

This marks the 21st year of the free annual Fishing Derby, held at Lake Mansfield for children 16 and under on Sunday, June 7, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. The event is free, no fishing experience is necessary, and registration will be at Lake Mansfield Beach. This event was first organized by the Southern Berkshire Youth Coalition (later absorbed by Berkshire South Regional Community Center) and brings local families and neighbors together for an afternoon of friendly competition and fun in the great outdoors. The Fishing Derby is scheduled during Massachusetts' free fishing weekend, so everyone can participate without needing to spend money on a fishing license. Awards will be given for the top three catches and food will be available to participants free of charge. The generous partnership of the Kiwanis Club with Berkshire South again this year makes this exciting event possible.

Volunteers are needed to help run this fun event, if you would like to help out, please contact Betty Banker at 413-528-2810 ext. 32 or bbanker@berkshiresouth.org.

Swim Lessons at Lake Mansfield

6 Ages 5 to 12. Enjoy swimming lessons under the sun at the Lake Mansfield Beach with instructors from Berkshire South Regional Community Center. A fun way to improve swimming skills while enjoying the outdoor environment! Advance registration is required. You may pre-register by calling the Center 413-528-2810. FREE to Great Barrington residents. Sponsored by the Great Barrington Parks and Recreation Commission.

Tuesdays & Thursdays

Session 1: Jul 2 - Jul 23 • Session 2: Jul 28 - Aug 18
Level 1: 10:30-11 a.m. / Level 2: 10-10:30 a.m. /
Level 3: 9:30-10 a.m.



2014 Fishing Derby, Luke Fenig age 2



Drop by for yoga – all levels welcome.

Our third year of Yoga

For the month of July/Monday, Wednesday, and Friday/ 8-9AM. Suitable for beginners or experienced yogis, enjoy the class at your own pace. Clear compassionate instruction, modifications always available, nature surrounding us with beauty, and practicing in fellowship with others. Delightful. Instructor Senta Reis, KYT will be joined this year by Aino Miilikin, KYT.

Some of the Best Things in Life Are Free!

Kathy Plungis, Parks Commission

Parks Commission Provides Swimming

With sunlight now extending into the early evening hours, our thoughts turn to hot summer days and swimming at our gem of a neighborhood lake, Lake Mansfield. The beach, under the guardianship of the town's Park Commission, hosted swim lessons for the youth of Great Barrington and Housatonic last year and will do so again this year. The Commission has a contract with the Berkshire South Regional Community Center to provide the swim lessons in addition to lifeguard duties at the lake's public beachfront.

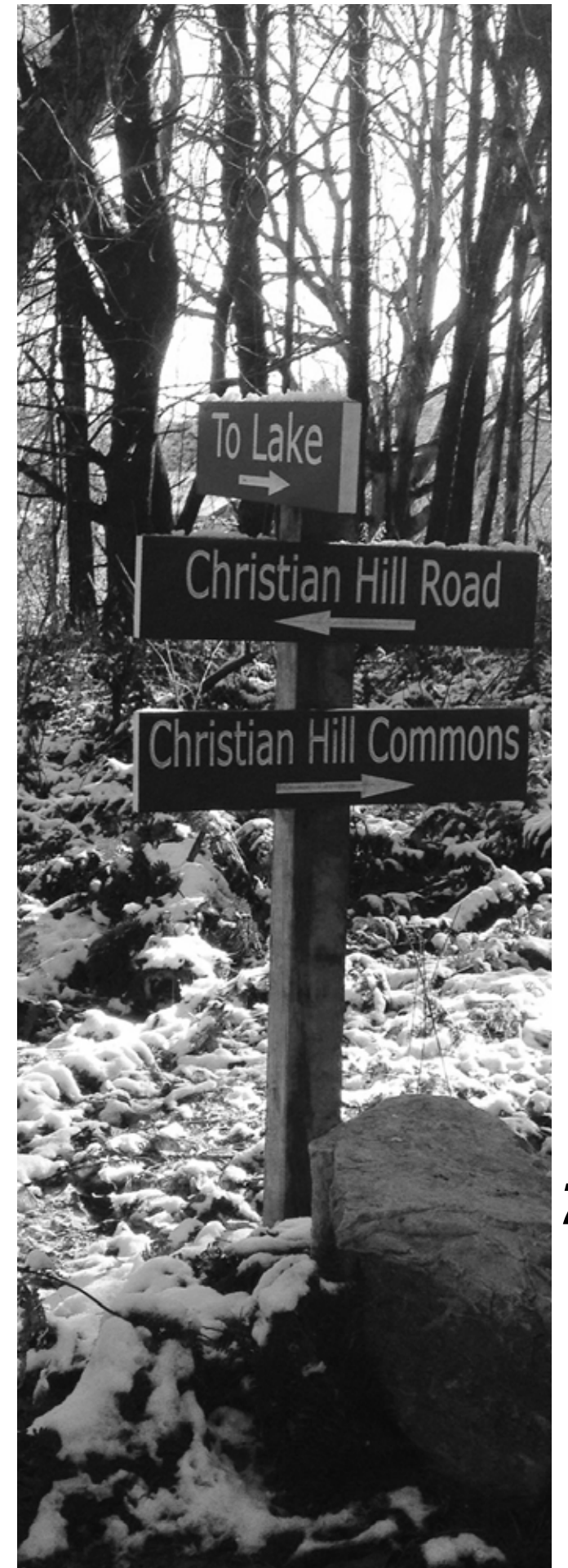
Swim lessons have been offered at the lake for decades, last year 30 kids benefitted. What better gift can parents, grandparents, guardians offer their child, but swim lessons, a skill that can bring many pleasurable times to a person from youth through their senior years! Please watch the local papers for this year's sign-up dates. Best of all, there is no cost for the lessons! As they say, "The best things in life are free"!

New Changing Rooms at the Lake

Two spacious changing rooms were built at Lake Mansfield last year, opening just in time for the 2014 summer season at the public beach. Thanks to a generous \$1,000 donation plus lumber for the interior benches from Lake Mansfield Alliance and remaining funding from the Parks Commission, we now have 2 large family-size changing rooms. Thanks go to our town's DPW Supervisor and crew for designing, permitting, and building of the changing rooms.

New Signage for Forest Trails LMA Dollars at Work

Each year LMA works to maintain and improve the trail system within the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest; volunteers spruce up kiosks, cut back brush, and maintain the trail bed. Last summer new trail juncture signs were installed, helping visitors to find their way through the forest and connect with the lake.



The Woods are Alive

Ron Dlugosz



The woods along the western shore of Lake Mansfield are alive with the presence of many animal species that make this natural habitat their home. Since moving here twelve years ago, Sharon and I have been privileged to observe many of them and marvel at their beauty and grace. Some, like gray squirrels and white-tail deer, are like old friends that hang around most of the time. Others, like groundhogs, possum, raccoons, mice and voles, can be pesky, digging holes in the yard or breaking small tree branches. Still others, like red and gray fox, bear, bobcat, coyote, and coywolves just occasionally make their presence known with a short visit, paw prints in the snow, or scat on the driveway. While all are interesting creatures, let me tell you about a few of the encounters that were truly memorable.

It is really interesting to witness individual personality traits. This was most evident in a pair of white-tail deer fawns. One spring we watched the twin fawns grow and explore their world. One was quite shy. It would stay near Mom and watch her for any signs of danger. The other was a terror. It would dash off and

sprint around, stopping only to explore a slight movement or a new smell. Over time, the daring one gradually coerced the shy fawn to join it in its adventures.

One late fall evening, Sharon heard a noise coming from the front porch. We turned on the porch light and opened the door. We were startled to see a huge black bear coming out from under the porch where he might have been checking out the possibility of a winter den. He just moseyed down the driveway, not at all concerned with our presence. We have also been lucky enough to have had four bobcat sightings. On one occasion, Sharon watched as a bobcat walked down our driveway, then broke into a run and ran right up a tree without breaking stride. Other interesting visitors are red and gray foxes. It is so enjoyable to see them playing on fallen logs, just exploring, seemingly without a care in the world.

We not infrequently drift off to sleep listening to the yipps, yapps and howls of coyotes. Once in a while we spot a scrawny coyote searching for its next meal. This fall we were fortunate to observe an amazing creature. I don't use the word amazing often but this was a unique experience. As I looked out our bedroom window one

Become a Member of Lake Mansfield Alliance 2015

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone

Email

Suggested annual dues

I wish to remain an anonymous donor.

\$20 Individual

\$35 Family

\$50 Supporter

\$100 Conservationist

\$250 Guardian

\$500 Steward

\$___ Trail Project Dedicated Donation

\$___ other

Make tax deductible donations to: GBLC Lake Mansfield Fund, LMA, PO Box 944, Great Barrington, MA 01230

morning, I saw an animal curled up in a ball on the ground about twenty feet from the house. It was difficult to determine what it was. It just looked like a large ball of fur. When it looked up, I stared in amazement. Too large for a coyote, it looked like a wolf. I called for Sharon and ran to get my camera. Throughout the day, this magnificent animal, who we named "Bruce," wandered around the yard and along the tree line toward the lake allowing me to take several photos.

Wanting to find out more about this animal, I searched the internet looking for clues to its identity. I found a photo of a coywolf that looked a lot like the animal I saw, and I discovered that mitochondrial DNA testing of eastern coyotes performed in Massachusetts has determined that a high percentage of the coyotes in our area are actually hybrids of western coyotes and eastern wolves from Ontario, Canada. In the samples that were tested, there was no evidence of domestic dog or gray wolf DNA. These hybrids are often called "coywolves" and were first observed in our area starting in the 1930s and 1940s. Their appearance and size varies depending on the percentage of wolf DNA. From the size and look of this animal, I would think a lot of wolf DNA was present.

There is such joy in seeing some of the many creatures with whom we share this land. The next time that you visit the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area, keep your ears and eyes open and your camera ready. If you are fortunate, you may see an animal you've never seen before, because the woods are truly alive....

Donation of Boat Launch

At the southern end of Lake Mansfield, most of us launch our canoes and kayaks, fish, or toss tennis balls for our dogs, unaware that we are on private property.

That's right. A property survey of Lake Mansfield in 2010 revealed that the Town owned only half of the boat launch. The Town portion is on the left, where the sign is located. After a bit of legal investigating, the land on the right, about 2,500 square feet, was determined to be owned by a private party who once owned much of the land on Knob Hill Road. Needless to say, this party was just as surprised to be told they owned the land as the Town was to learn we do not!

The Town is pleased to report that the owner, who wishes to remain anonymous at this time, donated the parcel to the Town. A sign may be placed at the site to commemorate this generous gift.

Now that the Town controls the entire parcel, plans for mitigating stormwater runoff for and improving the boat launch can proceed. The Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force will work with the State Office of Fishing and Boating Access to determine how to move ahead. We'll keep you all informed of the progress.



Lake Mansfield Alliance
P O Box 944
Great Barrington, MA 01230

A project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

Working to preserve, protect and enhance Lake Mansfield
as a vital natural habitat and community resource

Lake Mansfield

Spring Celebration & Clean-Up Day

Sunday May 17, 2015

10:30-3:00

Rain date: Sunday May 24

10:30-1:00 Lake & Forest Clean-up:
Meet at the beach, gloves recommended.

Bring tools: rakes, wheelbarrows, wagons...
and enthusiasm!

1:00-3:00 Potluck Lunch & Activities

Community Meeting

Guided Trail Walk: Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trails

Thank You Berkshire South Regional Community center for supporting
Lake Mansfield Spring Celebration & Clean-Up Day

Join your friends and neighbors
for a fun day of community action!

