

Let's meet at

# Lake Mansfield

The newsletter of Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA)

Spring 2016



## LM for the Future

As always, joy proves to be the best fuel for community effort and every season brings special ways to connect with Lake Mansfield. This year's intense and focused work to bring improvements to Lake Mansfield began with a Fall Celebration. Despite chilly October weather, folks joined to learn about trees, press cider from our bumper LM apple crop, explore forest trails, and roast marshmallows. Since then the Task Force has held 3 Community Forums and is currently preparing to make recommendations to the Select Board. Change will not happen overnight, but the planning of today can insure that the riches of Lake Mansfield are protected for the future.



Kids join Brandee Nelson to make LM apple cider!

Photo: Cindy Flint-Ragusa



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

### SEE INSIDE

Improvement Planning	2
Forest Trails	4
Birds of Prey Program	5
Here Comes Summer	6
Donate	7
Greenagers	7
Gift of Land	7

### 2016 LAKE MANSFIELD EVENTS

- Saturday April 30 9:00am-12:30pm**  
Lake Mansfield Celebration & Clean-Up Day
- Saturday May 7 1pm**  
Birds of Prey Program  
Tom Ricardi / Beach Area
- Sunday June 5 9:00am-1:00pm**  
22nd Annual Fishing Derby  
Berkshire South: 528-2810
- Summer Lifeguards 11:30am-5:30pm**  
Beginning on Memorial Day Weekend  
Provided every day during school vacation
- Children's Swim Lessons**  
(ages 5-12) Tuesdays & Thursdays  
Session 1: July 5th - 28th  
Session 2: August 2nd - 23rd  
*Free to Great Barrington residents*  
*To register call Berkshire South: 528-2810.*
- Summer Yoga in July**  
Monday, Weds & Friday 8-9am \$10 per class  
*a portion of proceeds to go to LMA*  
*Questions? info@lakemansfield.org*

# Lake Mansfield Improvement Planning

Danielle Desilets

Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture, Inc. (KZLA) was hired by the Town of Great Barrington in August of 2015 to complete the Lake Mansfield Comprehensive Improvements Planning project. While the Town has produced a number of studies and plans over the years – including the Community Master Plan, a traffic and hydrological study of Lake Mansfield Road, a Knob Hill Stormwater Improvement Design, and concepts for the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest & recreation area – our firm was charged with producing a plan that combines all of this thinking and prepares a comprehensive vision for the lake, the conservation forest, the recreation area, and the boat launch. We have been meeting with the Lake Mansfield Improvements Task Force regularly as part of the planning process. The Task Force gave us the following project goal: “To provide improvements for the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area that will

support the health of the environment and provide safe access and recreational opportunities for all.”

Our first step in the public process – and the most important task throughout the entire planning process – is listening. We want to reach as broad an audience and gather as many opinions as possible. We want to learn not only how the place is being used, but what the community’s vision is and what ideas they have for the site. For Lake Mansfield, the Task Force has hosted three public forums and KZLA has created two on-line surveys to date. Our first meeting and survey were geared toward sharing what we had learned so far, and to ask questions. The second public forum and on-line survey were used to gauge the public’s reaction to initial design studies. We concentrated on three focus areas that have significant impact on how the entire space is developed: Lake Mansfield Road, the recreation area parking (situated between the beach and trailhead), and the boat launch on the southern end of the site. There are significant issues with each of these areas.

Clearly, Lake Mansfield Road is in very poor condition. The pavement is extensively cracked, the sub-base (gravel layer) has been compromised, and the pavement is sloughing into the lake at points where wind action

and the rising lake level has eliminated the vegetated buffer. The curves in the road create short sight lines which impact safety concerns. Traffic volume is moderate, but traffic speeds and larger vehicles using the road are in direct conflict to those visitors who use the area for walking, jogging or biking.

The gravel parking lot at the beach is pitched towards the lake and stormwater runoff is eroding the beach, washing sediment into the lake, and carrying pollutants from cars into the water. The lot is used inefficiently as drivers will park vehicles where they like, and there is no handicapped parking space. And, despite having an accessible trail through the conservation forest, no accessible parking spaces have been provided. The boat launch has similar issues and is also challenged by the Knob Hill run-off.

In December 2015, the planning team met with Great Barrington Emergency Services, including the Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance Squad Operations Director, the Great Barrington Police Chief, the Great Barrington Fire Chief, the Town Manager, and members of the Task Force. The conversation was very positive and none of the representatives foresaw an issue with any of the potential changes to the traffic flow. We learned it is more important to have a quick response to a call location to attend to a victim, than from the emergency location back to the hospital.

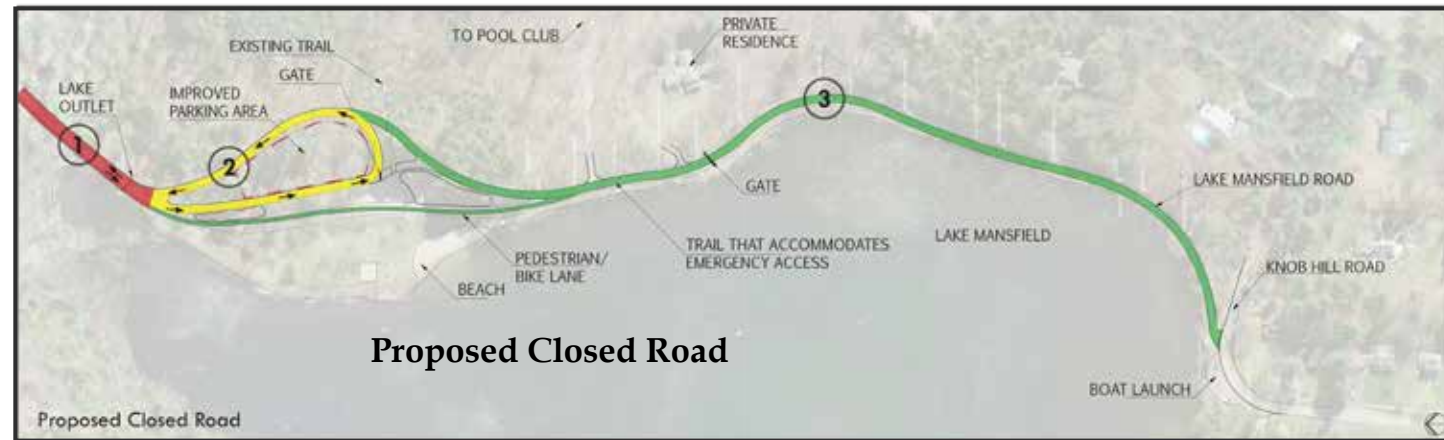
To date, KZLA has prepared several options for Lake Mansfield Road, the parking area and the boat launch. Detailed Plans are provided in the slide shows on the Task Force page of the town website: [http://www.townofgb.org/Pages/GBarringtonMA\\_LMITF/index](http://www.townofgb.org/Pages/GBarringtonMA_LMITF/index). All of the design studies for the three focus areas were

weighed against six criteria identified by the Task Force. Three major criteria reinforce the project goals and help to clarify how each design alternative meets those goals. These include: the design solutions impact on water quality, lake health and habitat; the impact on safety for all users; and, the impact on access to and through the landscapes, for both pedestrians and vehicles. Also evaluated for each study was project construction costs; potential funding support/grant opportunities; and, permitting requirements.

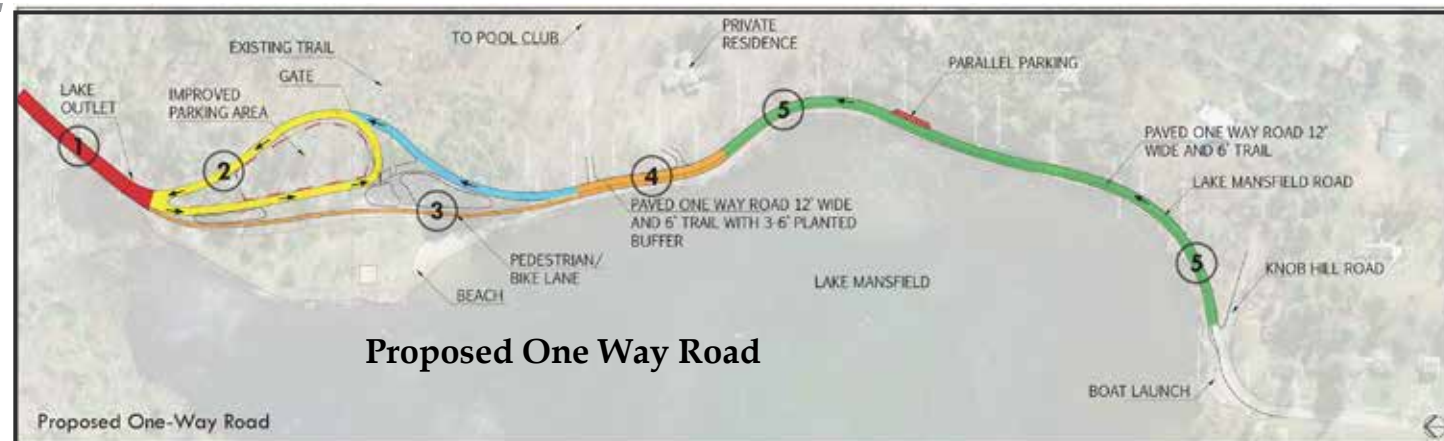
As part of the planning process, our team – which includes civil engineers Woodward & Curran, Inc. and ecologists New England Environmental, Inc. – has been evaluating other components of the project. New England Environmental, Inc. reviewed the lake health and provided recommendations for controlling aquatic vegetation and aquatic weed management. Woodward & Curran is assisting in the evaluation of stormwater treatment, options for replacing the lake’s outlet control structure to alleviate the flooding, as well as identifying potential funding opportunities and permitting requirements for the proposed alternatives.

Following the last public forum in March, KZLA prepared a final on-line survey to get more community feedback, especially pertaining to the public’s priorities and vision of the Lake Mansfield recreation area. Our role as planners is to synthesize the existing conditions, the feedback we receive from the community, and apply this information to the defined the project goals. Following that, we will prepare an overall plan that combines the preferred options for each of the focus areas, as well as other improvements to the recreation area .

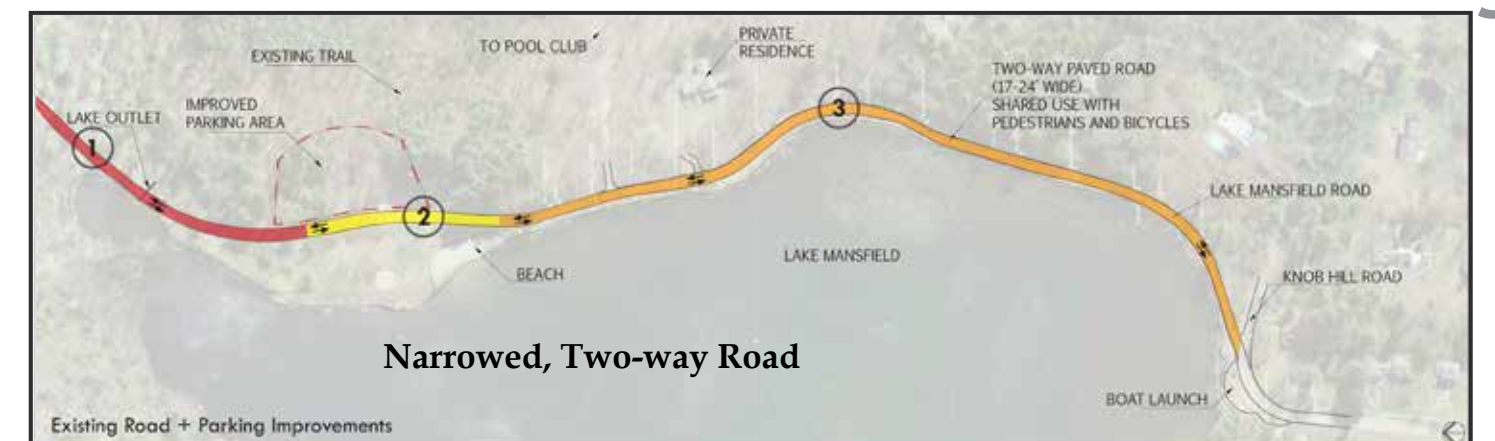
*Once the final plan has been accepted by the Task Force it will be presented to the Selectboard for approval. It is anticipated that this will occur in May 2016.*



Proposed Closed Road



Proposed One Way Road



Narrowed, Two-way Road

2

kzla 3

# The Wooded Path

India Clark

I moved to Great Barrington just over two years ago, from Boston. I had only seen our house via FaceTime, my now-husband walking from room to room, gesturing to the woods behind it and saying “I think this is the one.” It was a leap of faith in many ways. I was leaving my whole setup behind, gambling on love, on a life less stressful, on the power of a pathway through the woods to Lake Mansfield.



I am always finding ways to promise myself that things will be okay no matter what. Landing here, the wooded path became the thing I rely on in my mind. Come loneliness, anger, depression, the forest would hold me.

We walked the trail in November, crossed the bridge and gurgling brook, chose the widest path and heard our steps on the gravel. With Tarzan's vines in the wind, I encountered my breath. Hooking left to the boulder, I remembered my own stillness.



With snow, we cross-country skied over footprints and around the frozen lake. When my sister's family came, the trail was twice as long for little feet and we returned in the dark. I remember the smell of cold, blowing warm breath on wee fists, and for no apparent reason, the surprise of fireworks over Great Barrington.

This spring will be my third here, and the trail I once relied on as an idea is a now ritual. In the brownest days, last year's ferns lay out greenly. From inside, I see walkers and dogs. I run. I trudge in the mud. I walk with my husband, discovering who we are together. I meet people picking up trash. Mostly, I'm alone, allowing my mind to evaporate.

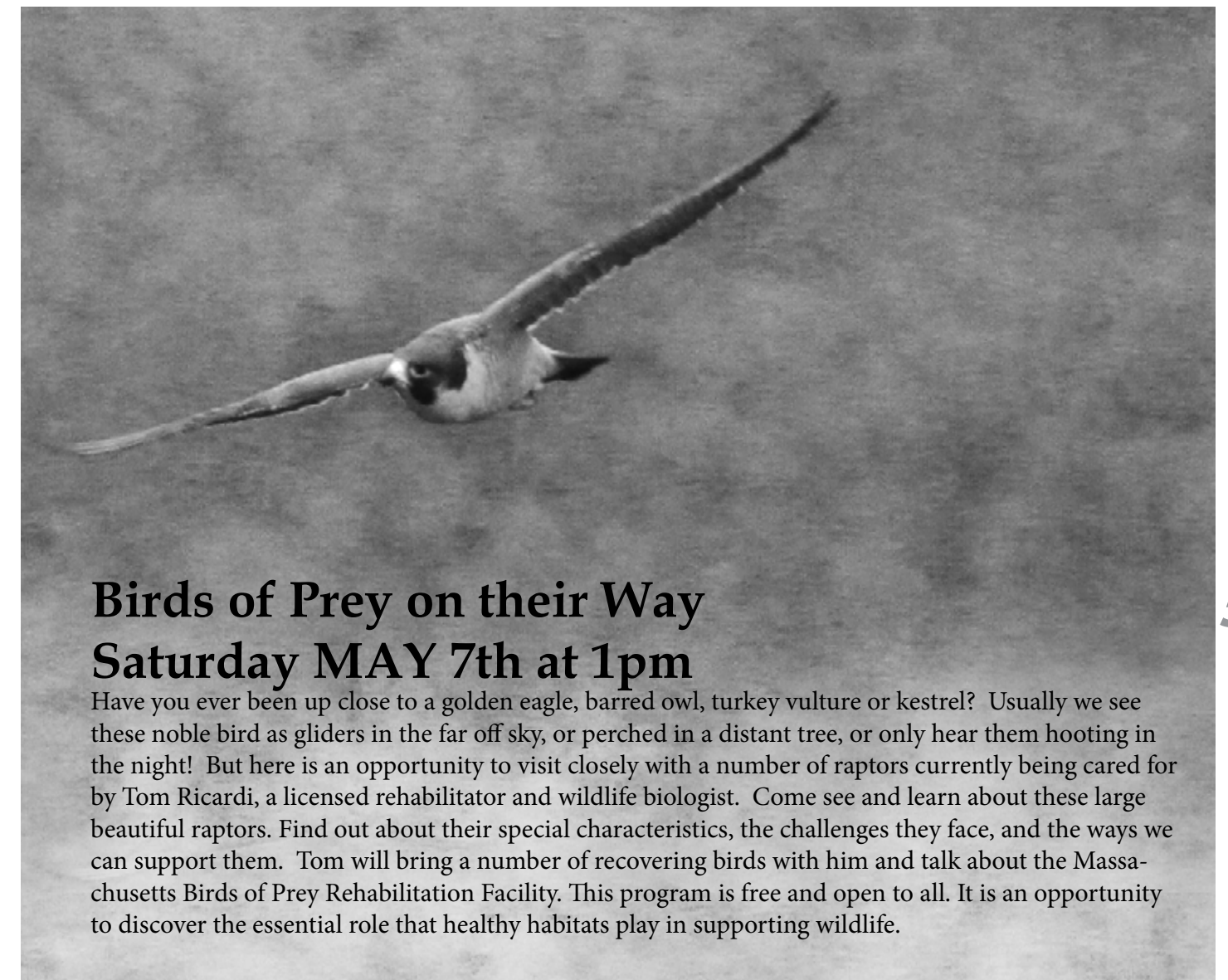
In summer, most days I visit the lake with a towel over my head for mosquitoes. The deer and her babies snort

and stare at me. Jack-in-the-pulpits become red berry clusters, and the forest is too thick to see through.

Rounding a corner, once I came upon a girl and her grandmother. The sun sliced brightly around my darkened silhouette and the girl startled, screaming. The grandmother laughed, told us she had lived on the edge of this land as a child, back when cows roamed where houses now cluster. She showed us the pine tree she used to climb and sit for hours. It meant something to her, and to me, to share this story. Will it stay with her granddaughter? Perhaps the combination of surprise, the smell of earth, and Grandma's nostalgia touched the girl's amygdala just so, forming a memory.

The forest floor is memories forgotten. With fall, I wonder how many times we will do this together.

The forest speaks silence. We witness each other in stillness, in change.



## Birds of Prey on their Way Saturday MAY 7th at 1pm

Have you ever been up close to a golden eagle, barred owl, turkey vulture or kestrel? Usually we see these noble birds as gliders in the far off sky, or perched in a distant tree, or only hear them hooting in the night! But here is an opportunity to visit closely with a number of raptors currently being cared for by Tom Ricardi, a licensed rehabilitator and wildlife biologist. Come see and learn about these large beautiful raptors. Find out about their special characteristics, the challenges they face, and the ways we can support them. Tom will bring a number of recovering birds with him and talk about the Massachusetts Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Facility. This program is free and open to all. It is an opportunity to discover the essential role that healthy habitats play in supporting wildlife.



Berkshire School volunteers pitch in to care for forest trails Lake Mansfield Celebration & Clean Up Day.

Improved weed fabric coming this year.

## Lake Mansfield Celebration & Clean Up Day

Bring your gloves and energy! Join us on Saturday April 30th. All hands are welcome as we spruce up the beach area, collect trash from roadsides and trails, and fight invasive species in the Conservation Forest. We gather to share thoughts and a potluck picnic at Noon.

## News from Kathy Plungis, PARK'S DEPARTMENT

Last year, just over 13,000 people used Lake Mansfield and our lifeguards oversaw them.

Berkshire South Regional Community Center, through funding by the Great Barrington Parks Commission, is again providing lifeguards for Lake Mansfield. The Parks Commission also provides for Lifeguards and swim lessons each year and this year is funding improved underwater weed control fabric for the swim area which will be installed on Lake Day in preparation for the start of the swim season, providing more weed-free space within the swimming area and for cross-lake swimming access. Each year weed fabric is installed in the spring and removed in the fall.

As always, please be respectful of the lake and beach rules that are posted at the beach. When driving along Lake Mansfield Road, be aware of pedestrians in the road and obey the speed limit and the No Parking signs.



## 6 Wellness & Well Being

Senta Reis will offer Yoga in July again this year. The morning practice (8-9 am) on Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays is open to all levels, no registration is necessary. Bring your mat and a towel or blanket and start the day with deep breathing and intention. \$10 requested donation. A portion of the proceeds are donated to LMA.

## Become a Member of Lake Mansfield Alliance 2016

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

## Gift of Land

*A donation of land to the citizens of Great Barrington to honor Carl Beling has helped make this boat launch possible.*

*February 2014*

Many thanks to the Beling Family. Now that the Town controls the entire parcel at the boat launch, plans for mitigating stormwater runoff 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.

## Local Power

In July of 2015, LMA hired the Greenager Trail Crew to complete much needed trail improvements. In one day the crew worked together to resurface Christian Hill entry trail, apply mulch up to the bridge, and install 2 new bog bridges. Your donations go to support the funding of this and other stewardship efforts. Thank you!





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

## Saturday April 30, 2016

### 10:30-3:00

**Raindate: Saturday May 7**

**9:00 - Noon Lake & Forest Clean-Up:**

Meet at the beach, gloves recommended.  
Bring tools: rakes, wheelbarrows, wagons...  
and enthusiasm!



**12:00pm Potluck Lunch Community Meeting**

**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!**