



Ensuring Our Future

# THE CONSERVATIONIST

*Conserving the Lands and Waters of the Belgrade Lakes Region for All*

VOLUME 8

SPRING 2019

## Conserving the Historic Blaisdell Property Overlooking Great Pond for Wildlife, Water Quality and Community

*“I could not be more pleased that your organization has our grandfather’s property.”*  
– Michael Blaisdell



Century-old Oak tree on Blaisdell property



© Alex Wall

Aerial view from Mt. Phillip towards The Mountain, including Blaisdell Property (approximate location on inset)

7 Lakes Alliance has taken a key step toward conserving water quality, wildlife habitat, traditional uses and recreational access near the shores of Great Pond by acquiring 119 acres from the Blaisdell family. The family’s ancestors settled in Rome as far back as the 1780s. In 2018, Stanley Blaisdell’s grandchildren reached out to 7 Lakes hoping to sell the land while still honoring their grandfather’s wish that the land be conserved. We at 7 Lakes saw a perfect fit with our own vision – a continuous corridor between two adjacent conserved properties, Mt. Phillip and The Mountain (named Blaisdell Hill on the 1856 map of Kennebec County).

On April 30, 2019, made possible by a conservation loan from Norcross Wildlife Foundation, 7 Lakes bought the land, capturing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to forever ensure public access to this historic land. To learn more and contribute to this historic project, visit [www.7lakesalliance.org](http://www.7lakesalliance.org) or call us at (207) 495-6039.



As seen from Hoyt Island, the purchase helps maintain landscape connectivity, including the viewshed.

### An Open Invitation

At 7 Lakes Alliance, we work hard to conserve the lands and waters of the Belgrade Lakes for all. This summer, our crews will spend long days underwater and in mud to fight invasive milfoil, train landowners to survey their shorelines, and stop new infestations through Courtesy Boat Inspections. Working with towns and road associations, we’ll help stop erosion which overloads our waters with phosphorus and leads to algal blooms and expand our Youth Conservation Corps to three teams who will design and install erosion control measures for more than 100 landowners. With Colby College, we’ll use the most up to date scientific methods and tools to collect the data needed to make the best possible water quality decisions. We’re also preparing fun and educational activities including walks on our trails, paddles, and talks on climate change, wild bees, milfoil, and more!

7 Lakes Alliance is, of course, only as strong as our partnerships and supporters. We invite you to get to know us better this summer! Visit us at 137 Main Street in Belgrade where you’ll find friendly staff, activities and resources to help you and your family enjoy nature, informational displays, and useful resources about the watershed. Stop by our office across from Day’s Store. Visit either location by boat to our public docks! Say hello to us in the field or on the water. Hike or ride on lands we own or steward as permanently conserved and protected natural areas. Join us for a star party, attend a talk about water quality, or suggest a topic! Visit our on-site water quality lab or [www.7lakesalliance.org](http://www.7lakesalliance.org) or our Facebook page.

Most of all, we hope you to visit! Until then, thanks for your support and for making conservation a tradition!

Laura Rose Day  
President and CEO

Tom Klingenstein  
Chair

## Battle Continues Against Variable Milfoil



The threat of invasive variable milfoil is still very much alive. In 2018, 7 Lakes Alliance's milfoil crew and New England Milfoil removed 16,800 gallons of variable milfoil and are expecting similar conditions in 2019. The 7 Lakes

Alliance crew snorkel miles of shoreline, haul thousands of pounds of milfoil, and work in waist deep muck to protect our lake from the damaging effects of invasive plants. Prevention is still the most critical and cost-effective way to control invasive aquatic plants! Trained volunteers and staff survey the shoreline through our Adopt-A-Shoreline Program, and the Courtesy Boat Inspection program has 5 boat launches to catch potential new infestations.

We did not find any new infestations in 2018 – and we will fight to keep it that way! However, the infestation in Great Meadow Stream is thriving, aided by low water levels and abundant sunshine. Our efforts aim to remove as much as possible and to contain and prevent the spread of the infestation. Without these serious and ongoing removal efforts, the infestations likely would have doubled, or even tripled in size. In New England as well as our own Belgrade Lakes, there are numerous reminders that, without vigilance – invasives spread rapidly, ruining swimming, boating, wildlife habitat, and property values. We are analyzing results, working with DEP and other experts to develop the most impactful and cost effective approach to fight back against milfoil in 2019. *Maine DEP, towns, local lake associations and other generous donors provide key support, including major funding from BLA's Stop Milfoil Program, for 7 Lakes Alliance's milfoil work.*

*Photo: Milfoil overtaking a boat marina in Lake Winnepesaukee, NH.*

## A Lasting Legacy



7 Lakes was honored to receive an additional 110-acre conservation easement from Warren and Helen Balgooyen before Warren's passing in December 2018. This gift capped Warren's lifetime of heartfelt conservation, including the donation of land on Watson Pond adjacent to the Kennebec Highlands, and of an earlier conservation easement on their 297-acre farm in Norridgewock, Smithfield, and Mercer that we hold along with Maine Farmland Trust.

Warren was a founder of Watson Pond Conservation Trust (1988), which became Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance (1991) then 7 Lakes Alliance (2017). A renowned naturalist, his 30 years of service and his passion for education shaped our mission and inspired us – to conserve the lands and waters of the Belgrade Lakes region for all. For this, he received the Eddie Mayer Conservation Award in 2017. Planning is underway for a lecture series honoring Warren's legacy.

## Calling All Volunteers!

We have many volunteer opportunities for the 2019 season and beyond! Whether you would like to meet & greet people in our gallery, become an invasive plant patroller, or let us hitch a ride on your boat to the monitoring buoy, we would love to have you join us in our efforts to protect the watershed! **More information @ [7lakesalliance.org/opportunities](http://7lakesalliance.org/opportunities)**

### Demonstrating Sustainable Forestry on 7 Lakes Alliance's Kelley Property

7 Lakes Alliance is working with foresters from Two Trees Forestry, a Winthrop based consultancy, to plan and administer a selective timber harvest on 7 Lakes land this summer. The goal is to improve the growing conditions for the woodlot's best oak, pine, and sugar maple, as well as diversifying wildlife habitat through patch cuts. We will focus on practices that produce conservation benefits.

This timber harvest was deemed appropriate due to the lack of significant riparian features or unique wildlife habitats, the minimal recreational use of the land, and the well-drained and stable soils, as well as the site's excellent potential to grow valuable, high-quality forest products. This is a great opportunity to serve as an exemplar of what quality forest management and exceptional logging can look like. We will offer discussions on how landowners might modify their harvest plans to better protect soil and water resources, wildlife habitats, and cultural features.

Two Trees Forestry and 7 Lakes Alliance will lead public tours of the harvest once the project gets underway, date and time TBA; we welcome all to attend and join the conversation.

— Jon Doty, Two Trees Forestry

### Standing Up for What We Believe In

7 Lakes Alliance testified in support of key bills such as LD 235 An Act To Increase Funding To Contain and Manage the Spread of Invasive Aquatic Species - also known as the Milfoil Sticker Bill and LD 216 An Act To Protect Water Quality by Standardizing the Lake Concerning Septic Inspection in the Shoreland Zone, and critical funding for the LakeSmart program. The passage of these bills will help protect the value of the Belgrade Lakes Region.

### 7 Lakes Alliance Honors Maggie Shannon With Esteemed Eddie Mayer Award

Read more about Maggie's decades of advocacy on behalf of our lakes at [7lakesalliance.org](http://7lakesalliance.org)





Over 50 people gathered for a guided full moon snowshoe trip across Great Pond. The group finished the adventure at Abena Shores where generous volunteers Bert and Sarah Languet had made a fire and provided refreshments. We'll host two full moon snowshoe hikes next winter. This summer, join us for hikes under the full moon!

### Key Indicators of Lake Health - In the Water and Under the Ice

7 Lakes Alliance's Dr. Danielle Wain leads our collaboration with Colby College, working closely with Colby's Dr. Whitney King to monitor all 7 lakes in the Belgrade Lakes Watershed. The following indicators are strongly linked together and, when observed as a system, help us better understand lake health.

**Stratification:** Temperature gradients in the water column can form layers that prevent the transport of oxygen and nutrients from the deeper parts of the lake to the surface layer. Lake turnover - the mixing of these layers - is natural and supports healthy productivity. We monitor the timing of stratification and lake turnover to understand changing nutrient levels all year, including under the ice.

**Phosphorus (water column):** Phosphorus is a nutrient found in both lake sediments and the water column. At low levels, it supports healthy productivity in a lake, while at high levels can spark an algal bloom. Humans can contribute, including through erosion, to increased phosphorus levels and algal blooms, a process known as cultural eutrophication.

**Oxygen:** Oxygen tells us a few things about lake health, most importantly viability of a cold-water fish habitat and the likelihood of nutrients (like phosphorus) being released from sediment.

**Sediment (iron, phosphorus, aluminum):** To collect these samples, we "grab" sediment from the bottom of the lake. These tests are sent to Colby's lab to be analyzed. They indicate the lake's natural ability to bind excess nutrients and the likelihood of further nutrient release during stratification.



Dr. Danielle Wain, 7 Lakes Alliance, Emily Cunningham Colby College Student

**Algae:** Monitoring the balance of different algal species in a lake is key to understanding and anticipating changes in lake health. Some algae are harmless and support the bottom of the food chain (diatoms like *Asterionella*), and some are dangerous (*Anabaena/Dolichospermum*) because of the potential release of cyanotoxins.

#### Watershed Science - Current Issues and Updates

This summer, 7 Lakes Alliance will be busy throughout the watershed! We'll have assistance from and provide an excellent hands-on experience to 6 Colby interns. Three are made possible through a generous grant to 7 Lakes from Wells Fargo. On East Pond, where in 2018 the largest alum treatment to date in New England was conducted, we'll perform intensive sampling to document post-alum treatment conditions to monitor the lake's recovery. In 2018, after the treatment, East Pond had excellent water quality. If this condition continues in 2019, 7 Lakes and its partners believe that the alum treatment will be effective for many years.

We'll also keep a close eye on North Pond to help understand the drivers of last year's algal bloom and if it might occur again this summer. We will continue in-lake monitoring of all the lakes and use this data along with the watershed surveys (such as those done by Great Pond and McGrath-Salmon in the past year) to determine the primary sources of phosphorus into the lakes to help inform action plans to prevent and remediate issues as indicated by the best science. For news, watch the websites and Facebook for 7 Lakes and each watershed organization. Interns will also work on a variety of other projects, including detection of cyanotoxins from algae, modeling the lakes to look at the impacts of climate change, and the contribution of good water quality in lakes to the local economy.



Diatoms

Anabaena

### Colby January internship: Reflections from the Winter Landscape



"In January I had the opportunity to intern with the 7 Lakes Alliance and meet the hardworking stewards of this landscape that I have been enjoying... I helped prepare files on rare plants, joined quests to set up game cameras to capture the local winter wildlife, and learned about 7 Lakes policies and plans." - Cal Waichler, Colby College, Class of 2021, environmental science major

See full article at [7lakesalliance.org](http://7lakesalliance.org)

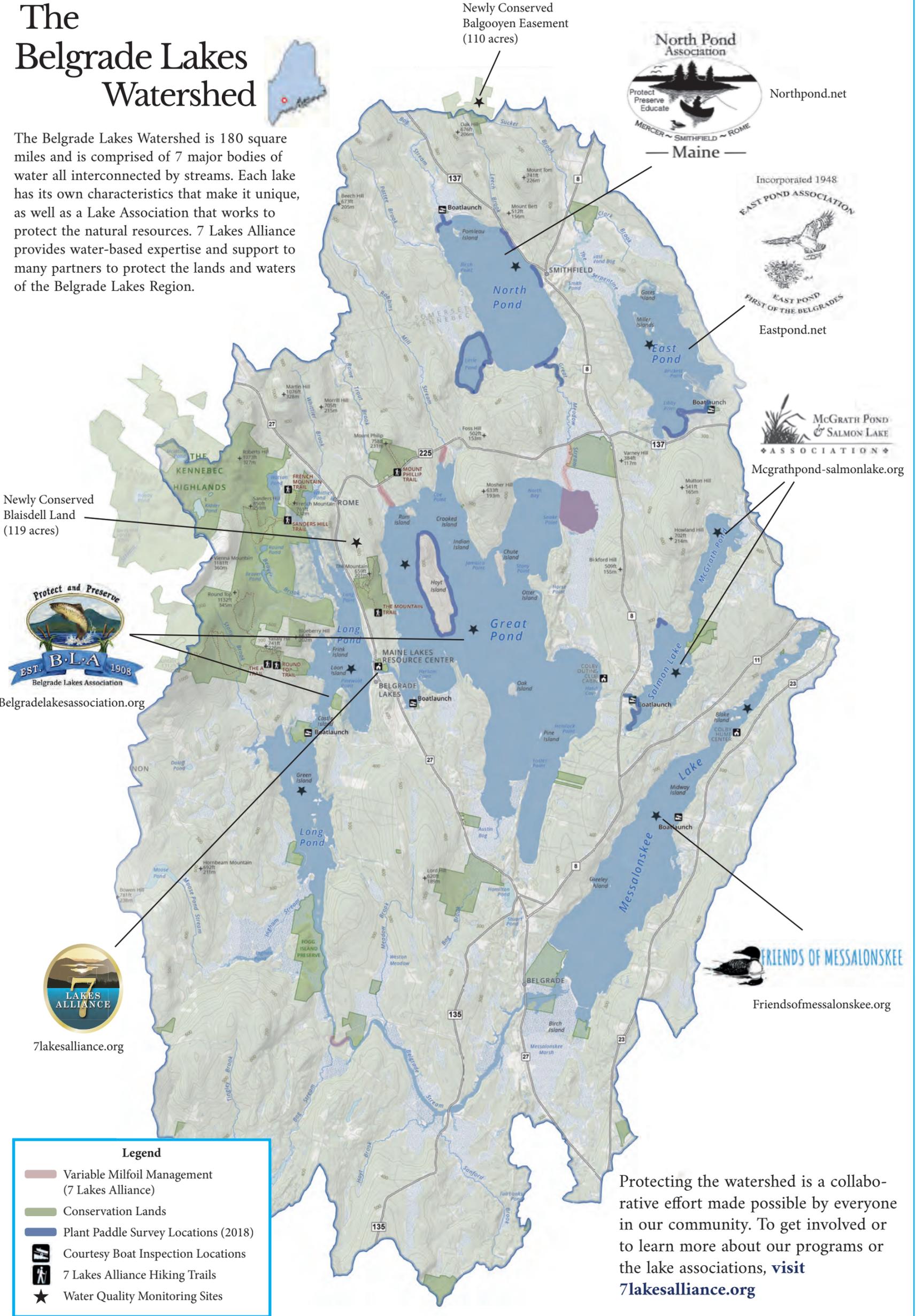
### East Pond Association Honored with Spirit of America Award



The Town of Smithfield presented the East Pond Board of Directors with the Spirit of American award for their efforts to improve water quality in East Pond. The Spirit of America Foundation Tribute is presented in the name of Maine municipalities to local individuals, organizations and projects for commendable community service.

# The Belgrade Lakes Watershed

The Belgrade Lakes Watershed is 180 square miles and is comprised of 7 major bodies of water all interconnected by streams. Each lake has its own characteristics that make it unique, as well as a Lake Association that works to protect the natural resources. 7 Lakes Alliance provides water-based expertise and support to many partners to protect the lands and waters of the Belgrade Lakes Region.



Protecting the watershed is a collaborative effort made possible by everyone in our community. To get involved or to learn more about our programs or the lake associations, visit [7lakesalliance.org](http://7lakesalliance.org)

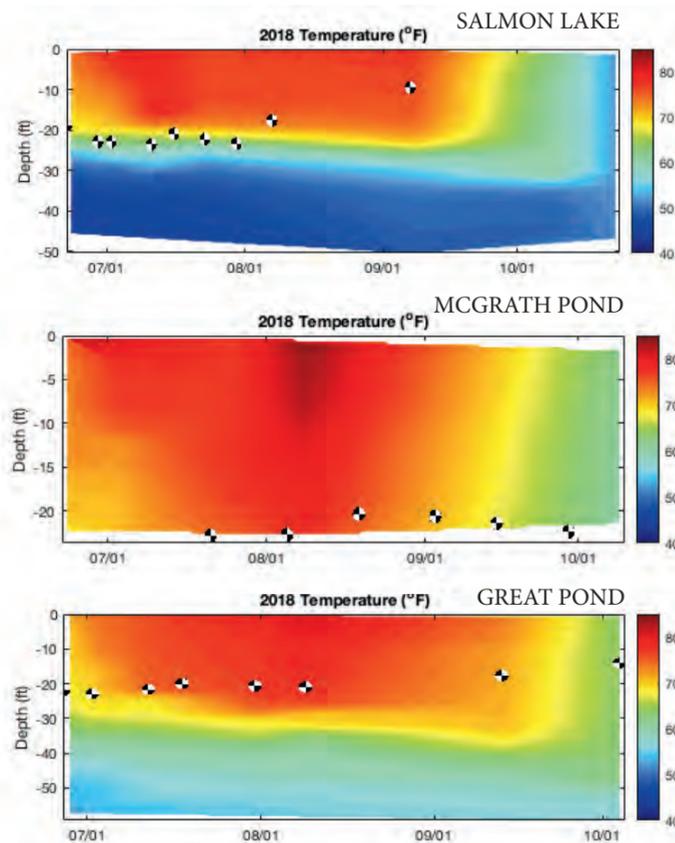
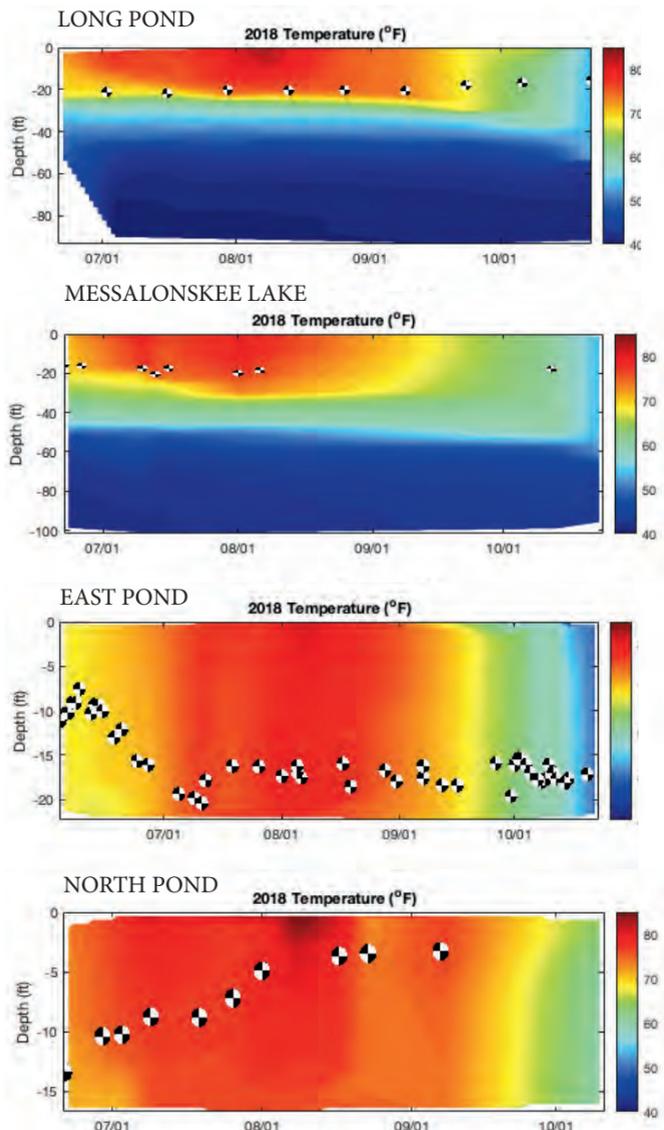
# The Belgrade Lakes Watershed



Ensuring Our Future

7 Lakes Alliance works with many partners to protect the Belgrade Lakes region for all.

## Watershed Science: Temperature and Clarity



**Secchi Disk Readings:** A method for measuring clarity of water bodies.

See all water quality data on our website @ [7lakesalliance.org/research](http://7lakesalliance.org/research)

From the data we collect, we create a snapshot of each lake at a given time. As can be seen from the watershed map (see insert) and in the temperature and clarity graphs for all the lakes, each one of Belgrade Lakes is unique in terms of size, shape, watershed characteristics, thermal structure, and clarity. With the data we collect at 7 Lakes Alliance, we make possible a watershed view to lake management that helps to determine solutions best suited to each individual lake, with an eye to its place in the Belgrade watershed. Through partnerships, we produce the best results!

## Map Highlights



### 7 Lakes Alliance Trails

7 Lakes Alliance maintains six (6) trail systems - with additional trails planned - to make these lands accessible to people of all ages. Come to 7 Lakes Alliance to purchase a trail map of the Kennebec Highlands! Fog Island Trail Official Opening: July 20th



### Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI)

7 Lakes Alliance coordinates courtesy boat inspections on 5 boat launches in the Belgrade Lakes Watershed, Memorial Day to Labor Day, 7 days a week. CBIs are the first line of defense against invasive plants and animals. More volunteers are needed on all lakes. To get involved email [amy.soper@7lakesalliance.org](mailto:amy.soper@7lakesalliance.org)



### Youth Conservation Corps (YCC)

YCC installs Best Management Practices (BMPs) throughout the watershed to decrease erosion and prevent algal blooms. 7 Lakes Alliance has the largest YCC program in Maine and is adding more crew members to meet the demand for projects throughout the Belgrade Lakes Region.

For more information visit: [7lakesalliance.org/erosion](http://7lakesalliance.org/erosion)



### Plant Paddles

7 Lakes Alliance -in collaboration with lake associations- hosts 4 Plant Paddles in the watershed. A plant paddle is a guided survey that takes place on shore and on the water. This is a fun, informal way to learn about Maine's invasive aquatic plants and help survey high risk areas for invasive plants. All experience levels and abilities are welcome to attend! Dates are as follows: East Pond: July 15th, 8:30am - North Pond: July 30th, 8:30am - Salmon Lake/ McGrath Pond: July 25th, 8:30am - Great Pond TBD



### Conservation Lands

7 Lakes Alliance helps conserve and steward over 9,300 acres of conserved lands. With the help of the Stewardship Program, multiple trail work days will be completed in 2019.

To volunteer visit [7lakesalliance.org](http://7lakesalliance.org)



### Milfoil Removal

Variable milfoil is monitored and removed by 7 Lakes Alliance staff as part of STOP Milfoil - a collaboration with Belgrade Lakes Association. Milfoil Update Presentation: August 23rd. Learn about variable milfoil in Great Pond and ask our milfoil crew questions directly.

To learn more, visit [7lakesalliance.org/milfoil](http://7lakesalliance.org/milfoil)

## Investing in the Youth Conservation Corps = Investing in the Lakes

7 Lakes Alliance is proudly home to Maine's largest Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). YCC is a preventative program that aims to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the water by increasing infiltration and stabilization. Unfiltered runoff entering the water is a key reason for algal blooms.

YCC installs Best Management Practices (BMPs) like rain gardens, infiltration trenches, erosion control mulch, and more. BMP's are long term solutions to a very serious problem in the Belgrade Lakes. Luckily landowners are becoming increasingly concerned about algal problems and are signing up for YCC projects to protect the watershed. The support of our watershed community is an important piece as to why the YCC program has been successful over the last 23 years.



Right: 2018 Youth Conservation Corps Left to Right: David, Sally, Tyler, Dexter, Brian, Sarah, Jake. Below: Brian, Emily. Above: Installing Erosion Control Mulch



*"Thank you for a job well done! This project will protect our water frontage from erosion and benefit the water of North Pond!" – Beth Enman*

In 2018, the crew installed over 80 projects to decrease erosion in the Belgrade Lakes watershed. Another important benefit of YCC is that we provide summer employment to 10-15 young individuals- typically high school or college students. This is the first employment for many of our crew members and we aim to teach them responsibility and other important job skills they can use in the future. 7 Lakes Alliance is adding another crew to the YCC team for the 2019 season to keep up with growing demand. With increasing costs, we need additional funding to keep this program robust and sustainable.

**Thanks to everyone who has had or plans to have YCC install erosion control projects on their property to protect the lakes!**

### Summer 2019 Event Highlights

7 Lakes Alliance believes in an active relationship with the lands and waters that sustain us- having fun as well as learning, living and conserving our beautiful Belgrade Lakes watershed. Year-round, we host events and activities in our gallery and in the great outdoors.

Stay informed of new events by checking [7lakesalliance.org/allevnts](http://7lakesalliance.org/allevnts) or our **Facebook page**.

#### June

- 1<sup>st</sup> - Stewardship Trail Work Day
- 12<sup>th</sup> - Invasive Plant Patrol 101
- 17<sup>th</sup> - Moonlit Hike
- 20<sup>th</sup> - Climate Change Communications workshop with Maine Lakes Society

#### July

- 3<sup>rd</sup> - Chewonki Predators
- 11<sup>th</sup> - Climate Resilience Talk
- 16<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> - Adopt-A-Shoreline Workshops
- 16<sup>th</sup> - Dr. Szantyr, Ticks and Lyme Disease
- 15<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, & 30<sup>th</sup> - Plant Paddles
- 9<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> - Chewonki Owls, Tide Pools
- 20<sup>th</sup> - Official Opening Day of Fogg Island
- 29<sup>th</sup> - Wild Seed Project
- 30<sup>th</sup> - Road Workshop

#### August

- 5<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> - Adopt A Shoreline Workshops
- 6<sup>th</sup> - Chewonki Scales & Tails
- 14<sup>th</sup> - Avian Haven Loons & Leads
- 23<sup>rd</sup> - Milfoil Public Update



*Atlantic Salmon Release with Snow Pond's After School Program*



*Photo: Ryan Burton*



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