

Pattagansett Lake Association – October 2024 Update

This started out to be the September update but while waiting for a rainy day to write it, it almost became the November update...

2024 Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was held on July 10 on the Island Campground beach and was well attended. Due to recent changes and resignations, all but one of the nine board of directors' positions was up for election or re-election. Attending members voted to retain the current officers for two-year terms and three new directors were voted in, David Harlow, Wayne Gronlund and Wendy Pedersen. Officer and board member contact info can be found on the website. Our herbicide treatment plans, information on the ongoing hydrilla infestation in the CT River and lakes within the state, and a review of current invasive and native weeds were presented.

2024 association membership is currently 68.

2024 Herbicide Treatment

Treatment of areas supported by abutting property owners, as well as some common areas not otherwise directly supported by the adjacent property owner was performed on July 19. The herbicide ProcellaCOR, designed most specifically to treat milfoil, was again applied as it was for the first time last year. The positive results we got last year were reinforced by this second treatment and the contractor believes we have sufficiently killed off most of the milfoil in and around the areas where it was applied. This year, 27 property owners participated in the treatment program compared to 19 in 2023. We raised and spent nearly an identical amount as we did in 2023, \$18,000, from the 27 participating owners. Our attempts to raise funding from the town went unrewarded. Although the first selectman seemed sympathetic to our concerns, the selectmen's' discretionary funding was cut in half by the Board of Finance and those previously getting funding from this source saw their grants significantly reduced. We are working on ideas to gain some town assistance for next year.

2025 Herbicide Treatment Plans

With milfoil abated for now, we are looking to augment our DEEP permit to allow use of another herbicide that will treat certain weeds ProcellaCOR did not affect. Fanwort, an

invasive plant, appears now to be our most intrusive weed. As we have previously reported, to use the herbicide our contractor recommends for these plants, DEEP required us to do a survey of the lake to search for endangered plants thought to be present around the lake. We completed a formal request for proposal to conduct this detailed survey with three qualified contractors who confirmed their interest in the project but only received one bid of \$9,000. Thanks to an unexpected and very generous donation of \$7500 from Pauline Lord and David Harlow of White Gate Farm, we were able to conduct this survey during August and early September. When we receive the completed survey report by the end of this month, we will be able to submit it with our application to DEEP for the use of additional herbicides in 2025. Our contractor has reported that no endangered plants were found.

With the augmented permit, our plan is to use an herbicide known as Clipper for treatment next year. In addition to fanwort, it is effective on water lilies and some other plants as well. The cost to treat with Clipper has been quoted at \$370/acre versus the \$970/acre we have paid for ProcellaCOR treatments although two treatments per year are required, (effectively \$740/acre).

We should stress that it is not our intention to kill off all the weeds in the lake, especially native plants, but to reduce their presence where they have become a nuisance and an impediment to the enjoyment of the lake, particularly in the shallow coves that front many of the homes around the lake. We will update the membership as we navigate the permit process.

Hydroraking

This year's hydroraking was recently completed. 12 property owners participated, combining for 45 hours of work, much of it in the northwest cove where so much of that work has been ongoing for several years now. Over that time, the amount of now open water has increased tremendously. This effort may never end but thankfully the group in the cove has been very dedicated to clearing it of the weeds and muck that made it almost impassable to where it is now.

Boat Launch Sign

We have been working with the boating division at DEEP to have an invasive plant warning sign installed at the boat launch, especially after seeing the story in The Day about the discovery of hydrilla in Gardner Lake. That story featured a photo that got our attention. The photo included a large sign DEEP had installed warning that hydrilla had been found in that lake and instructing boaters of the proper procedures to clean their boats and trailers before and after use of the lake and the state law that requires them

to do so. We had previously complained to DEEP that their current signage was not effective, and we wanted to place our own standalone sign. Upon seeing the Gardner Lake sign, I contacted DEEP to find out when they would be installing one at our lake. I was told it was DEEP's policy to only place the sign seen in the photo at lakes that had a confirmed hydrilla infestation and lakes that did not have hydrilla would need to design their own sign that meets DEEP approval, furnish the sign and then DEEP would install it. We submitted a draft design that was rejected and after several attempts, our proposed design, I believe, now meets all their very specific requirements. I am waiting now for final approval of the proof we had made up at a sign shop. With any luck, we may have it up by the end of the year. During this prolonged process, I reached out to the CT Federation of Lakes for input and eventually spoke with their president. Much to my surprise, I was told the CFL board was not likely to support the idea of urging DEEP to provide a standardized sign, on the scale of the sign seen at Gardner Lake, for all lakes with state launches, or even a standardized template for one, which they also refuse to provide. The CFL's position is the only effective deterrent to lake infestations from use of the boat launches is to have an inspector at the launch and that signs are ineffective. Some lakes in CT do have an inspector present at the launches but most inspectors are paid, usually by the town or a lake authority if they are large enough to support that. They may be right but it seems unlikely that will happen at Pattagansett Lake and certainly a prominent sign can only help.

The Dam Status

The dam division at DEEP has advised us their project to repair the dam, which will include building a new "fish passage" is in the planning phase and will keep us informed as the project progresses. They also said they have replaced the "weir" boards that we had originally reported as missing or leaking. Certainly good news here. We have been told this is a 2-3 year process and as far as we know, we are in the first year.

Website

We would like to add some lake photos to the website. If you have any you think would serve us well there, please forward to me and I can have them added. We are open to suggestions for website enhancements.

Please let us know if there are any issues or suggestions you would like to raise and want the board to consider.

Thanks,

Mick Byrne

