

Annual Report of the Raymond Waterways Protective Association –August 2023

Dear Citizens of Raymond,

It is our pleasure to report to you on the activities of the Raymond Waterways Protective Association since our last report to the Town in August 2022. The Association has pursued our mission of protecting the water quality in our lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams, and to promote good watershed stewardship, through a variety of projects and activities.

A. PREVENTING AND REMOVING INVASIVE AQUATIC SPECIES

1. COURTESY BOAT INSPECTION

RWPA collaborates with individual lake associations to provide boat inspections at four launch sites in Raymond, on Crescent Lake, Panther Pond, Sebago Lake, and Thomas Pond. The CBIs—including paid inspectors and volunteers—inspect boats, trailers, and fishing gear entering and leaving these waters. They remove all plant material found, bag it, and turn it in to the CBI manager. We then have the plant material identified by an expert.

This service is the most important step we take to protect our waters. All of Raymond’s lakes and ponds (with the exception of Sebago Lake) are free of aquatic invasives, and CBI is a major reason they have remained so, despite the presence of variable milfoil in surrounding waterbodies such as Sebago Lake, Long Lake, and Thompson Lake. In recent years, our CBIs have been finding many fewer pieces of the invasive variable milfoil at the Sebago launch site than they did just a few years ago. And that is due to the good work of our DASH crew!

Each lake association may request how much CBI coverage they think their lake requires, and each contributes financially to the entire CBI program. Funds also come from the Town, a grant from the Maine DEP, and contributions of RWPA supporters. In the 2023 season, RWPA had 9 paid inspectors—primarily students—and 5 volunteers, who fill in when staff inspectors are not available, especially early and late in the season.

Please contact us if you are interested in being a CBI.

2. DASH: REMOVING INVASIVE AQUATIC PLANTS FROM THE RAYMOND SHORES OF SEBAGO LAKE, JORDAN RIVER, AND DINGLEY BROOK

The success of our Diver Assisted Suction Harvester (DASH) program since 2009 enabled us last year to pass this torch to the Town of Raymond. A new consortium of the Town of Raymond, the DEP invasive species program, and three property owners abutting the lower Jordan River (Indian Point, Panther Run Marina, Jordan River Marine Condo Association) are now responsible for eradicating residual infestations of variable milfoil in those areas. This is a huge

accomplishment, of which RWPA and all our collaborating governmental and private associates are justifiably proud.

The new approach to milfoil removal is supported by a 2-year (2023 and 2024) grant from the DEP. An experienced private contractor, New England Milfoil, has sent a team of divers to survey all the areas cleaned by RWPA divers and will remove invasive variable milfoil as they find it. The DEP has developed a 5-year plan for managing the variable milfoil removal program. RWPA is now playing an advisory role for the consortium. For example, Neil Jensen, who supervised the DASH divers for over a decade, introduced the contractor to all the sites we have previously worked, and RWPA has shared with the contractor the most recent maps as recorded by RWPA divers. Funding for the new milfoil removal project comes from the Town, the three business owners, and the DEP grant, in roughly equal thirds. RWPA itself will continue to survey Dingley Brook and the upper Jordan River twice a year and will remove any invasive plants found there.

As long as there is any invasive variable milfoil in the Sebago Lake watershed, we will all have to be super vigilant. *If you notice any plants that look suspicious to you, please let us know. We will check them out right away!*

B. PROVIDING CONSULTATION SERVICES TO PROPERTY OWNERS

Primarily addressing erosion control concerns, RWPA can work with any property owner in Raymond to survey their land, observe any erosion problems, and offer suggestions for addressing those problems using best management practices. We encourage the use of native vegetation and erosion control mulch to cover bare soil. To support those suggestions, RWPA provides property owners with DEP literature describing how to implement the recommended best management practices for erosion problems. We may also refer landowners to other resources for assistance, such as the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District.

If you have problems with stormwater runoff, please feel free to contact us. RWPA and other organizations in the area have experience with various techniques to slow water down as it moves over the land and to give it time to sink into the ground, rather than run directly into the water, carrying sediment and potentially excess fertilizers, which promote algae growth.

C. SUPPORTING LAKE ASSOCIATIONS FOR WATER QUALITY MONITORING

The RWPA has created a “library” of equipment available for loan to lake associations. This includes such tools as a Secchi disc for measuring water clarity, a digital projector, a viewing scope, a dissolved oxygen meter, and a Van Dorn water sampling set for taking samples at varying depths. We share this equipment and our expertise with volunteers on the individual lakes and ponds so they can measure water clarity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and phosphorous, all of which are important indicators of lake health.

We have budgeted \$1000 for each lake to use—in a 50-50 match—over five years to enhance their water quality monitoring programs. This year the Thomas Pond Improvement Association used this fund to replace their dissolved oxygen meter. Our “library” also includes a small, open boat with an electric motor and a small trailer that lake groups can borrow. Both are stored on Panther Pond.

All the data we collect helps us to monitor the health of the lakes, which is so important to everyone in town to help maintain waterfront property values. We are grateful for all the volunteers who patrol the shores each season looking for invasive plants. We call them Invasive Plant Patrollers (“IPPers”). So Crescent Lake has CLIPPers, Panther Pond has PPIPPers, Raymond Pond has RIPPers, and Thomas Pond has TIPPers. It is important to find any invasive plants early so we can remove them before they create a dense infestation. We look forward to more collaboration with the individual lake associations. *Again, if you notice any plants that look suspicious to you, please let us know—you don’t have to be an official IPPer.*

D. EDUCATING AND ADVOCATING

We are always on the lookout for opportunities to share information about our waters, advocate for their protection, and pass on our expertise. We are available to speak to groups about our valuable natural resource, our waters. A newly discovered infestation of invasive variable milfoil in Big Lake in Washington County has given folks there impetus to create their own DASH program, which is modeled on RWPA’s. Since much of the land around Big Lake is owned by Native American tribes, the tribes have taken the lead in addressing the problem. The Tribe purchased much of the equipment that came off RWPA’s DASH I boat, which we retired a few years ago, and RWPA helped train tribal representatives in the construction and operation of their own DASH boat.

The RWPA board publishes a quarterly newsletter that reaches 200 to 300 people directly by email. Board members have participated in numerous meetings and conferences around the state, including the annual invasive aquatics summit. They have also contributed articles to news outlets, supplied the town with reports, and spoken to the Town Select Board and the budget committee, advocating for support for our lakes.

We welcome volunteers. And we would love to increase the size of our board of directors. Let us know if you'd like to get involved to help keep Raymond's waters clean and healthy.

E. LEADERSHIP TRANSITION AND EXPANDING THE RWPA BOARD

New board members welcomed in 2023 include: Ray Bersch from Crescent Lake, Steve Craine from Raymond Pond, Jessica Fay from Sebago Lake, and Nancy Crilly-Kirk from Panther Pond. At our August 2023 meeting, we re-elected Marie Connolly as Treasurer and elected Wayne Eckerson as President, Nancy Crilly-Kirk as Vice-President, and Steve Craine as Secretary. These new board members and new officers represent a critical step in transitioning to a new

generation of leadership for Raymond Waterways Protective Association. Longtime RWPA leaders Peggy and Neil Jensen continue as board members in a mainly advisory capacity.

We are always looking for and welcoming new folks who bring energy and passion for caring for our lakes!

Wayne Eckerson, President, RWPA

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