Volume 39 • Issue 1 • Summer 2026

CHINA LAKE ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

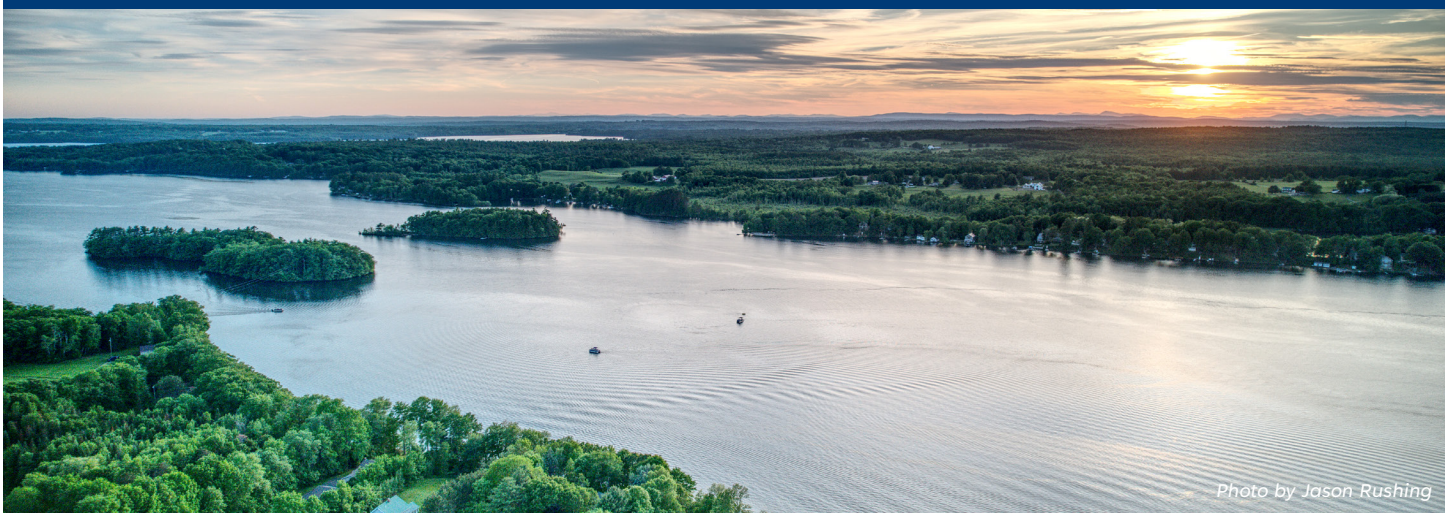


Photo by Jason Rushing

President's Report

As we return to the shores of China Lake, many of us feel a renewed sense of hope. The call of loons, evenings on the water, fishing at the Causeway, and time spent with family and friends remind us why this place means so much to our community.

Summer also brings new opportunities to protect the lake we treasure. While water quality challenges remain, including runoff, erosion, and development pressure, there are also strong reasons for optimism. Across Maine, more property owners are improving shoreline buffers, reducing runoff, and adopting lake-friendly landscaping practices. Volunteers, conservation groups, town officials, and residents continue to work together with a shared commitment to protecting clean water for future generations.

There is real potential for continued improvement in the years ahead. Small actions across the watershed can make a lasting difference. Healthy shorelines, properly maintained septic systems, and support for watershed projects all contribute to improved water quality over time, including efforts to prevent the spread of invasive plants such as Eurasian milfoil.

Equally important is the growing appreciation for the lake itself. Whether someone is fishing at sunrise, kayaking at sunset, observing wildlife from a camp, or simply enjoying the quiet beauty of the water, these connections inspire stewardship. People protect what they value.

There is good reason for cautious optimism. With continued cooperation, education, and care, we can help ensure that future generations experience the same beauty, recreation, and sense of peace that China Lake has provided for so many.

In the pages ahead, we highlight the hard work of volunteers, residents, and partners who continue to care for China Lake and its watershed.

Here's to a safe, enjoyable, and encouraging future for our beloved China Lake.



Eric Lind
President, China Lake Association

Water, Wildlife & History: Touring China Lake







China Middle School seventh-graders had a grand tour of China Lake, learning about its glacial origins, fish and wildlife, and colorful history.

The June 4 event was a collaboration between CLA, the State Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, and the State Department of Marine Management. It originated with an idea floated at a CLA board of directors strategic planning session last year. The plan that emerged was to give China students an

opportunity to see and learn more about the lake firsthand. China Middle School administration, including Principal Lacey Studholme, enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity, and after many weeks of planning, the seventh-graders took to the water.

The sunny day began early at the fish ladder at Box Mill in North Vassalboro, where DMR scientists Nate Gray and Jaidyn Negly, explained the life cycle of alewives and bluebacked herring, as the fish climbed the ladder. The students then were bused to the East Vassalboro landing, where they boarded boats to join CLA volunteers for the tour up the lake, escorted by Game Warden Nick Johnson. A second group of students, having already taken in the fish-ladder presentation, reversed the route before the day ended.







"This was an outstanding way to show the lake to the next generation," said CLA President Eric Lind.

"We're already making plans to make this an annual event."

Top right: from left, CLA volunteer Linda Hendrikse along with CMS student McKenzie Brown, teacher Danielle Lefferts, and students Madelynne Mitchell and Aria McKinnis enjoy the lake tour. Middle: from left, CMS students Jackson Arsenault and Levi Proctor.

KWD
Kennebec Water District

FIND *DAILY* CHINA LAKE WATER LEVEL DATA AT:
www.KennebecWater.org/water-quality/lake-level-info

China Lake Water Quality Monitoring & Watershed Update

by Robert Bickford, Water Quality Manager, Kennebec Water District (KWD)

KWD completed 11 sampling events (~every two weeks) between April and October 2025. Water Quality Technicians monitored a suite of parameters to provide insights into the conditions at and below the surface of the water.

The parameters monitored included Secchi Disk transparency, water temperature and dissolved oxygen gradients, total phosphorus at multiple points in the water column, chlorophyll-A at the lake's surface, and zooplankton enumeration within the water column.

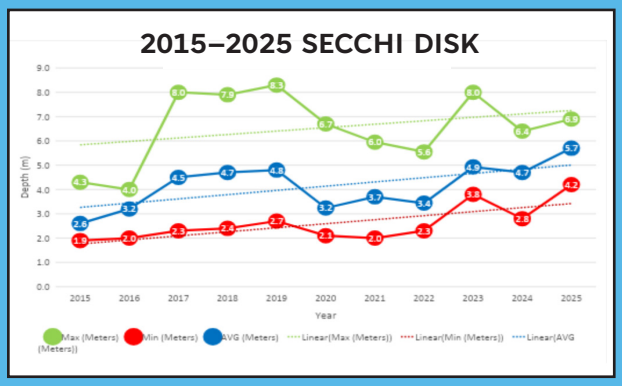
All the data collected throughout 2025 has been reported to Lake Stewards of Maine and the DEP for validation. A review of the data shows the improving trends observed over the past decade within China Lake continue to hold true.

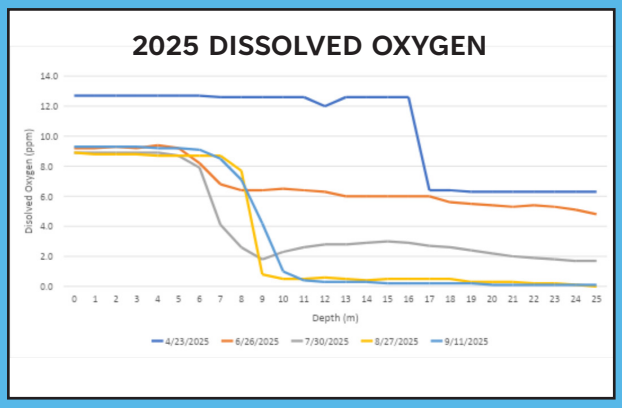
These trends, seen in the graphs, are an increase in the minimum, average, and maximum Secchi Disk transparency, periods of anoxia (absence of dissolved oxygen) at the deepest parts of the lake, and high levels of internal phosphorus recycling.

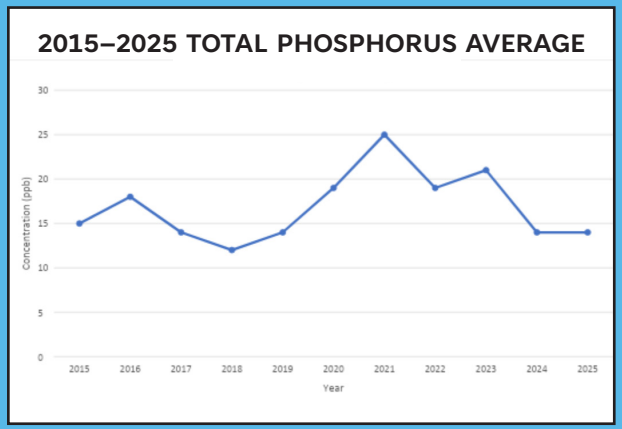
Throughout 2025, KWD managed several projects focused on preserving the water quality of China Lake. These activities included a selective harvest of the South Peninsula to maintain a mixed-age multi-species forest to provide the vegetated buffer possible and installed over 150 new signs on KWD lands around the West Basin. Likewise, KWD has continued to partner with conservation organizations, CLA being one of them, to provide buffer bundles to China Lake owners, to stand up and administer the Courtesy Boat Inspections program for the region, and to educate both land owners and users of China Lake of the importance of their actions on water quality.

KWD remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting China Lake and continues to find ways of working to preserve its water quality.

WATER QUALITY CHARTS OF CHINA LAKE'S WEST BASIN













Left: Raft with vegetation and camera, Top right: Loon examining next from prior years. Bottom right CLA Directors BIll Powell and Mike Hendrikse prepare to deploy the raft.

Loon Nesting Report

by Bill Powell, CLA Director

Mike Hendrikse and I launched the loon raft this April soon after ice out. We renovated the raft with additional flotation, cedar boughs, and moss.

This is our fourth year of offering loon parents a safer, ready made nesting area for laying eggs and raising their young.

The first year we put out the raft, loons built a nest on the shore 50 feet away from it on the shore. The second year loons nested on the raft but failed to produce eggs. Last year a loon was constructing a nest on theraft but failed to return after her initial visit.

So far this year we have not seen any loon activity on the raft. We did see a loon pair swimming near the raft seemingly interested in making it their nesting site, but they never returned.

Similar to past years, we have seen beaver and muskrat digging up and eating the plants on the raft. I'm still perplexed as to why rodents choose to eat the greenery on the raft while there are unlimited plants growing in the area. Audubon has been unable to suggest a cure for these invading rascals.

Despite the nesting failure of the loon pair in our nesting area, there were 27 adult and 3 baby loons seen during last year's loon count. I can confirm that at least one of those chicks made it through the summer and migrated to open water in the fall.

I can also report that a baby loon has been seen this spring in the same area where last year's chick grew up. Let's hope another chick can reach adulthood and return to have it's own babies.

Overall, the Maine Loon Restoration Project has been a success. Last year 106 rafts were deployed in lakes around the state producing 78 chicks.

Our loons have come so close to accepting the raft as a place to nest. We will continue to make repairs and motifications to the raft in order to help our beloved loons nest successfully.

Don't Let Invasives Take Root!

Protecting China Lake starts with recognizing invasive aquatic plants and watching for early signs. Prevention and early detection are our best defenses against threats to water quality, habitats, and recreation.

With support from the China Region Lakes Alliance, Courtesy Boat Inspectors staffed all three of China Lake's boat ramps during peak hours, completing 2,263 inspections—no invasive plants found.

Education is equally important. In partnership with Lake Stewards of Maine and neighboring lake associations, we hosted a free "Plant Paddle" workshop. More than 30 participants learned to identify invasive plants—and none were found.

While this is encouraging, inspections alone aren't enough. Every lake user plays a role. Boaters, anglers, paddlers, swimmers, and shoreline residents should stay alert and report anything suspicious.

Eurasian watermilfoil is common, but other threats—like fanwort, hydrilla, and curly-leaf pondweed—also pose risks. Recognizing multiple species improves early detection.



Eurasian milfoil by Kennebec Journal, 2019. Used under fair use for educational purposes.

Explore the Maine DEP Invasive Aquatic Species Program to learn more, and help keep China Lake healthy for generations to come.

Membership Matters!

Visit www.chinalakeassociation.org/membership to join or renew by credit/debit card or mail this form with your check.* If you've already joined or renewed, *thank you*!

Contact Information

Name:_____

Permanent Address:_____

City State ZIP: _____

China Lake Address: _____

City State ZIP: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Email address: _____

Membership Level

- ❑ $10,000 — Eagle
- ❑ $1,000 — Heron
- ❑ $100 — Trout
- ❑ $5,000 — Falcon
- ❑ $500 — Osprey
- ❑ $50 — Bass
- ❑ $2,000 — Hawk
- ❑ $250 — Loon
- ❑ $25 — Alewife

Other amount:$_____

Make checks payable to China Lake Association, P.O. Box 6215, China Village, ME, 04926. CLA is a tax-exempt organization as outlined in 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code (EIN 01-450868). Your donation — made without consideration of goods or services — is tax-deductible. INTERNAL CODE: SN25

2026 Annual Meeting

Saturday, July 25, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.
China Primary School
763 Lakeview Dr., South China, 04358

Agenda

8:30 – 9 a.m. . . . Registration & Networking
Social time and refreshments from Nash's Cafe

9 – 9:15 a.m . . . Welcoming Remarks, Overview & Past Accomplishments
Eric Lind, CLA President

9:15 – 9:45 a.m. . . . . Water Quality Report
Robbie Bickford,
Water Quality Manager, KWD; CLA Director

9:45 – 10:15 a.m. . . . . Annual Loon Count & Update
Bill Powell, CLA Director

10:15 – 10:45 a.m. . . . . The State of Maine's Fisheries
Jason Seiders, Biologist
Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

10:45 – 11:15 a.m. . . . . Living on the Edge: Shallow-water Habitat in China Lake
Jeremy Deeds, Ph.D., Aquatic Ecologist,
Lake Assessment Section, Maine DEP

11:15 – 11:30 a.m. . . . . Election of Officers & Directors, Treasurer's Report, Bylaws Vote, Audience Q&A
Eric Lind, CLA President

Elect following as Directors with terms expiring in:

- **2027:** Gerry Boyle, Bob Hargadon, Eric Lind, Stephen Greene
- **2028:** Robbie Bickford, Steve Jones
- **2029:** Jen Chase, Mike Hendrikse, John Perron, William Powell, Jen Syer

Elect following as Officers until the July 2026 annual meeting of the members:
Eric Lind, President
Jen Chase, Vice President
Stephen Greene, Secretary
Steve Jones, Treasurer

11:30 a.m. . . . . Closing Remarks, T-Shirt Giveaway & Adjournment

Review CLA's current and draft bylaws versions prior to the vote at the Annual Meeting

tinyurl.com/BylawsCLA

2026 - 2027 CLA Board of Directors

President
Eric Lind

Vice President
Jen Chase

Secretary
Stephen Greene

Treasurer
Steve Jones

Registered Agent
KWD

Directors
Robbie Bickford
Gerry Boyle
Bob Hargadon
Mike Hendrikse
John Perron*
William Powell
Jen Syer

** appointed in 2026*

Members and the general public are welcome to attend our Annual Meeting — *join us!*

CHINA LAKE ASSOCIATION

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04926

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Help Protect China Lake — Renew Today!

Scan or visit www.chinalakeassociation.org/membership today

info@chinalakeassociation.org • facebook.com/chinalakeassociation • Instagram: @chinalakeassociation

Preserving China Lake for Future Generations
Through Environmental Stewardship and Community Action

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