



# CHINA LAKE ASSOCIATION

*Newsletter*

*Volume 28, Issue 1*

*Summer 2015*

## President's Report

Hello everyone! First things first.....A great big THANK YOU goes to David Landry for doing such an exceptional job over the many years he served as President of the China Lake Association. In David's last newsletter he spoke of the Association's Mission. This Mission Statement was formalized at a meeting of the Board of Directors in February 2015.

### **China Lake Association's Mission Statement.....**

- To educate the public regarding China Lake, which is declared by Law as public property owned and controlled by the State of Maine for the benefit of the public
- To educate the public regarding the restoration and protection of China Lake
- To encourage, facilitate, and disseminate scientific research regarding China Lake
- Through education, fund raising, and other proper activities, to guard the waters of China Lake against pollution, to preserve the environmental health of the China Lake watershed and to protect and enhance the beauty of the Lake and its adjacent area.

I remember speaking with David after the 2012 Annual Meeting, and we talked about the possibility of alewives being a potential solution to the water quality problems China Lake has experienced for decades. There was already some positive evidence seen at Webber Pond, and then on Three Mile Pond; when alewives migrated to those water bodies, water quality showed improvement. This has eventually led to the China Lake Association's participation as a partner to the **Alewife Restoration Initiative (ARI)**. This is a State initiative to reintroduce alewives into China Lake and ensure their migration back to the ocean. Alewives are an anadromous species of herring, and in 2014 the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) released over 20,000 alewives into China Lake. The Department also plans to release more alewives into China Lake again in 2015. For detailed information about the ARI please see the individual reports by the various partners seen in this newsletter.

Please recognize that there has already been a great amount of work and effort toward making the ARI happen. Many, many meetings to coordinate the effort have been held in China and Vassalboro, along with various outreach presentations, to keep the public informed and to educate everyone about ARI's importance. Plans are to either remove or provide fish passage around the several dams between China Lake's outlet and the Sebasticook River. Yet ARI is a funding-driven program, and successful completion of the ARI is dependent on every financial opportunity available. Grant monies are now in-hand, and other funding sources are constantly being sought, but the project needs all the financial help it can get. If anyone feels so inclined and wants to make a donation please send your tax deductible contribution supporting the ARI to the China Lake Association via the following address: P.O. Box 6215, China Village, Maine 04926 ear-marked "**ARI Contribution.**"

The China Lake Association is now committed in partnership with the China Region Lakes Alliance, Maine Rivers, the

### **Board of Directors**

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*President's Letter (continued from page 1)*

Sebasticook Regional Land Trust, and the Maine Department of Marine Resources to implement the ARI project. In addition, by introducing alewives into China Lake there is a strong possibility that the alewives will consume phosphorus (a known catalyst of algae blooms). Alewives ingest phosphorus and then migrate back to their ocean environment taking the phosphorus along with them. So once the fish passageway is complete, we hope that the alewives will begin establishing a balance in the lake's eco-system as they remove some of the phosphorus when they migrate.

In other news, in February 2015, I attended the State of Maine's **Courtesy Boat Inspection (CBI)** training. Attendance at this training allows us to apply for grant monies to fund the CBI program, which provides oversight inspections of watercraft entering and exiting China Lake, Three Mile Pond and Webber Pond. This summer, veterans of the program Tyler Rollins and Jade Canak will be coordinating the CBI staff, who will be on the lookout for invasive aquatic plant species.

Also, please be aware of the **Lake Smart Program**, a State-sponsored initiative to examine shorefront properties and to work with property owners to design water quality plans that are effective at reducing non-point sources of pollution into the lake. Measures to mitigate on-site storm water and educate people about pro-water quality protection efforts are among LakeSmart's goals. Many properties around China Lake have already qualified for a LakeSmart Award.

Finally, the Association's **Poster Contest** is an annual event involving the China Middle School, sponsored and organized by Marie Michaud and Nancy Woodbrey. With the help of Landis Hudson from Maine Rivers and Nate Gray of the Maine Department of Marine Resources, China Middle School students learned about alewives and the importance the alewife has played in the past in other Maine communities. Thanks go to everyone who participated. We will see the results and the winners of this year's poster contest at our annual meeting.

In closing, the China Lake Association looks for your support of the ARI as we move forward with hopes of better water quality for everyone who enjoys China Lake. Please know that your membership to our organization is greatly appreciated. **I hope you will join us at the Annual Meeting this July 25, 2015 at 9:00AM at the China Primary School.** I invite you to check out our website at <http://chinalakeassociation.org>. Have a great year!

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Pierz, President

## China Lake Association Annual Meeting

Saturday, July 25 ~ 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. ~ China Primary School gym

- Welcome – Scott Pierz, President
- Poster Contest Winners – Marie Michaud and Nancy Woodbrey
- Alewife Restoration Initiative (ARI) – featuring Nate Gray of the Maine Department of Marine Resources, with guest appearances by Landis Hudson (Maine Rivers), Jennifer Irving (Sebasticook Regional Land Trust, and James Hart (China Region Lakes Alliance).
- Coffee Break - Coffee and muffins provided by *Green Bean Cafe*
- LakeSmart Program news – Maggie Shannon, Director and Lake Smart Coordinator, Maine Lakes Society
- China Lake Loon Count – Bob O'Connor
- Election of Officers
- Other Business
- Adjourn



## Alewife Restoration Initiative (ARI)

by Nate Gray

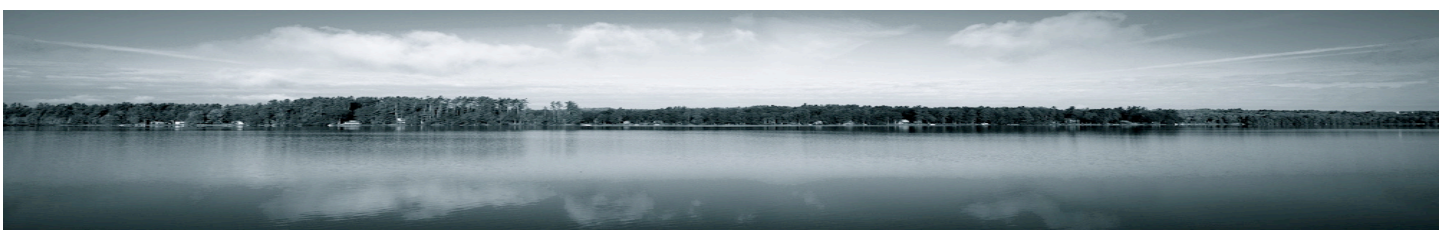
In the fall of 2014, round about early October, I swung in to the China Lake outlet dam. Accompanying me were my newly born son Henry and my lovely wife Jessica, and two of my colleagues from Marine Resources, Craig, and Toby. They were there to look at the alewives. Literally, millions of them, a teeming throng, hordes, masses, piles all swimming languidly in the outlet cove - the water alive with these children of the adults we stocked in May. To say it was awe-inspiring would be an understatement.

Very rarely do people get to see this number of fish in one spot. You could go to the Boston Aquarium every day for the rest of your natural life and not see such numbers. This school of alewives was 125 yards long by 30 yards wide and about 1 to 2 yards deep, each alewife a perfect replication of its parents writ small. Small is a relative measure. For juvenile alewives, the China Lake ones are massive. A testament to the "richness" of the lake's waters, which provide lots to eat and lots of room to grow. This gathering at the outlet of China marks the beginning of an epic four-year migration - one that will see them exit the lake, descend Outlet Stream, drop into the Sebasticook River, then the Kennebec River, on out to the Gulf of Maine and beyond. The journey is filled with peril both man-made and natural. Predators abound. There are hungry mouths to feed and the alewives at this stage are bite size.

As we watched, every once in a while the school of alewives would part, and you would see a largemouth bass lurking, eyes cast upwards, waiting, watching, expectant. Another hole in the school reveals a brown trout acting much the same as the bass. Waiting, watching. The alewives part for only a moment, revealing the predators beneath them, and then close again like a curtain. They seem to know they rule the "numbers" game, saying, "You might get a few of us, but never all." The alewives are right and they have been for several thousands of years since they first colonized these river systems on the eastern seaboard after the last ice age. As the huge school slowly begins its out-migration, they shoot beneath the gates of the dam, and descend the stream. The numbers build until the water rushing beneath the gates is brimming with young alewives rushing downstream. A fire hose filled with fish comes to mind.

It is hard not to reflect on the journey that has brought us to this place. Twenty years ago, I'd have laughed somewhat derisively if you'd told me that we'd be stocking China Lake with anadromous alewives. But, taking a lesson from the alewife playbook, persistence pays. Now, our journey begins. To restore fish passage into China Lake, to reconnect this massive water body to its rightful place in the ecosystem, to undo the ravages of mindless industrial age commerce, to rebuild a once mighty fishery is no small undertaking, but we must undertake it.

I am mindful of voices past. All, in context, said, "Be careful, be good stewards of your fisheries, or suffer the consequences of collapse." We've seen the consequences of collapse on China Lake. We see it nearly every day we actually take the time to look at the lake. Last May as I drove by the outlet, I squinted my eyes and imagined a 3,900-acre putting green. We can do better, must do better. The Alewife Restoration Initiative is a coalition of very dedicated individuals from many organizations, striving to reach this goal through fund raising, education, outreach, and advocacy, because we know the color of "failure." Green.



# Sebasticook Regional Land Trust Offerings

by Jennifer Irving – Executive Director, SRLT

Sebasticook Regional Land Trust (SRLT) is pleased to be a partner in the Alewife Restoration Initiative (ARI). A membership-supported conservation association, the SRLT is committed to celebrating the wonder, beauty, and diversity of Central Maine's wild and working landscape. We work with willing landowners and communities to conserve forever the lands they love and the resources we all rely upon – clean water, abundant wildlife, productive farms and forests, and places to hunt, fish and play with friends and family. We believe the restoration of migratory fish to China Lake via Outlet Stream is a worthy investment in our community and in the health of the Lake and the Sebasticook River.

Now celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the SRLT offers nearly 2,000 acres for hiking, hunting, fishing, and nature education on our Community Lands. We also offer monthly paddles, walks, and learning events that are free and open to all. For more information about properties, programs, and volunteer opportunities, please visit our Web site at [www.SebasticookRLT.org](http://www.SebasticookRLT.org), find us on Facebook, call 207-948-3766 or email [Jennifer@SebasticookRLT.org](mailto:Jennifer@SebasticookRLT.org).

The SRLT is coordinating a monthly speaker series this year at the Vassalboro Grange in partnership with the Alewife Restoration Initiative. Join us on the second Wednesday of each month (excepting August) at 7 p.m. for an informational program, conversation, and light refreshments. Upcoming programs include: June 10, Dr. Erynn Call, "Eagles and Alewives on the Sebasticook," and July 8, Don Robbins, "History of Masse Dam." The Grange is located on Route 32 in East Vassalboro.

Do you want to help return migratory fish to China Lake? Please join us as a volunteer or make a financial gift. Tax-deductible contributions may be made to Alewife Restoration Initiative, P.O. Box 184, Unity ME 04988. Gifts may also be made by credit card at our Web site, [www.SebasticookRLT.org](http://www.SebasticookRLT.org). Thank you!

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## Why LakeSmart?

### Unintended Consequences

None of us grew up knowing what harms or helps a lake. We see lakes as grand enough to be beyond any impact we could make, but the truth is very different. A number of our lakes are in trouble or heading for it because many small insults from our own seemingly innocent activities have polluted them. A small muddy rivulet trickling down a camp road is unremarkable until you stop, add up all the camp roads in a lake watershed, add in all the year's rainstorms, and then multiply that number by a decade or two. The sum equals a lot of rainwater runoff entering lake waters, loading pollutants, and causing trouble for lake lovers and wildlife.

### The Good News

Nature is resilient, and now that we understand the cause, we can supply a cure. **LakeSmart** is an education and reward program that offers shoreline property owners a blueprint for living in ways that protect the lake and help it regain a healthy equilibrium. The program is run by the Maine Lakes Society, which trains local volunteers to assess properties and make recommendations. Homeowners are then free to adopt the suggestions or not, as they wish.

### When You're Buff Enough ...

Buffers, those strips of mixed vegetation along the lakeshore, are the best lake protectors, but there are other important things to know about lakeside living too. If a property meets all LakeSmart standards, its owners are recognized with the distinctive LakeSmart Award, 2 signs for posting beside the lake and the road, which recognize their outstanding lake stewardship. Neighbors notice these signs and begin to adopt LakeSmart practices themselves. When enough of a lake community becomes LakeSmart, protecting the water becomes "the thing to do," and the lake is assured of a good future.

We're running LakeSmart on China Lake this year, and we urge you to participate. The program is free, signing up is simple, and the payoff is immense. For more information or to book a LakeSmart date, please contact Scott Pierz, the China Lake Association President at (207) 200-8361.



## LakeSmart FAQ

by Maggie Shannon



### What is LakeSmart?

LakeSmart is an education and reward program for lakefront property owners who maintain their homes in ways that protect lake water quality and property values.

### What Does It Cost?

Nothing, and there is no obligation afterwards. How you participate is up to you.

### How long does it take?

The LakeSmart visit takes less than an hour.

### What are the benefits?

LakeSmart properties are equivalent to undeveloped land, so becoming LakeSmart protects water quality, property values, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat on your lake. As clean, clear fresh water becomes more and more scarce across our country and around the world, the value of Maine's world-class lakes will only grow, as will the value of lakeshore properties.

### What happens during that "LakeSmart" visit?

A trained volunteer will come to your home, explain the program, and assess your property. Then he or she will walk it with you and point out places where stormwater might be affecting the lake or where different management will save you maintenance costs in the long term. If there are corrections that can be made, the volunteer will provide information on how to address the issue. What you do next is completely up to you; you may choose to follow the suggestions or not. There is no cost or obligation to you for the visit.

### What's the matter with stormwater?

Stormwater runoff ruins lakes! Erosion and sedimentation from home sites and camp roads are the major cause of smelly, cloudy water, algal blooms, fish kills, and water you wouldn't want to swim in. No one wants that to happen on the lake they use and love.

### Can you tell me more about the LakeSmart visit?

A trained volunteer screener will assess four areas of your property, starting at the driveway and working toward the shorefront. If your home scores well in all 4 categories, you will get the prestigious LakeSmart Award - two handsome blue and white signs for posting at the roadside and lakefront. Most properties don't qualify for an Award right away. If this is what happens in your case, you will be given a practical blueprint that shows how to correct runoff problems. Just for having the visit, you will receive a Certificate of Commendation, helpful suggestions, and our thanks for caring about the lake.

### Who runs it?

LakeSmart is a program of the Maine Lakes Society. It is delivered by trained members of lake associations on their home lakes. For more information: <http://mainelakessociety.org/lakesmart/>

***LakeSmart is free,***

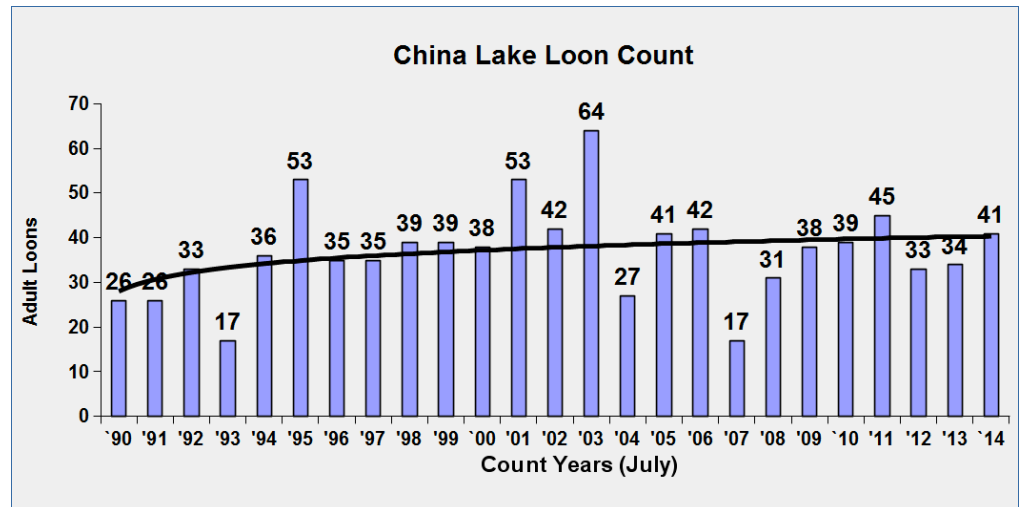
***Signing up is simple,***

***And the payoff is enormous***

***You can have your lake and keep it too!***

## Loon Update

The July 2014 Loon count for China Lake was right at our average of 41 adult loons. The loons consistently return on the day of, or the day before ice out. Maine Audubon conducts this annual state-wide loon count. This year's count will take place on July 18 from 7:00 - 7:30 a.m. all across the state. If you would like to help, please call Bob O'Connor, who organizes the counters for China Lake, at 445-4140. Results of this count will first be reported at the Annual China Lake Association meeting on July 25<sup>th</sup>.



For more loon information, go to: <http://maineaudubon.org/blog/tag/loons/>

## The Alewife Story – A Brief History

by Landis Hudson – Maine Rivers

Alewives have been central to the web of life in Maine for thousands of years. Every May and June, adult alewives, guided by their sense of smell, migrate upstream from the ocean to rivers, streams, ponds and lakes to spawn. To witness the annual migration of these fish is impressive and inspiring. Historians tell us that before the European settlement, there was probably not a stream anywhere in the Gulf of Maine, unless it was blocked by waterfalls, that didn't have an annual alewife migration.

Alewives are a source of food for all sorts of other creatures in lakes, ponds, rivers, streams and the ocean—including striped bass, bluefish, weakfish, tuna, cod, haddock, halibut, American eel, rainbow trout, brown trout, lake trout, landlocked salmon, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, pickerel, pike, white and yellow perch, seabirds, bald eagle, osprey, great blue heron, gulls, terns, cormorants, seals, whales, otter, mink, fox, raccoon, skunk, weasel, fisher, and turtles. Everything eats alewives.

After the removal of the Edwards Dam in Augusta in 1999 and the removal of the Fort Halifax Dam in Winslow in 2008, sea-run fish passage has been restored from the ocean directly to the Sebasticook River and to the outlet of the China Lake Outlet Stream. Millions of alewives, the “fish that feed all,” now make their way into the Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers.

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## Poster Contest!

The China Lake Association (CLA) sponsored its Fourth Annual Poster Contest on March 27, 2015. This time around students at the China Middle School were asked to work with their parents to create an informative poster based upon the **Alewife Restoration Initiative (ARI)**. Landis Hudson, Executive Director of Maine Rivers, and Nate Gray from the Maine Department of Marine Resources presented an awesome and inspiring program about the plan to introduce alewives into China Lake. The presentations explained how the health of rivers, lakes, and the ocean are connected to alewives. The CLA will sponsor awards for first, second, and third place winners. Awards will be presented at the **China Lake Association's Annual Meeting to be held July 25, 2015**.

Information about the Poster Contest can be seen at the China Lake Association's website: <http://chinalakeassociation.org>.

CLA recognizes contributors Mrs. Maroon, China Middle School, CLA Event Organizers Marie Michaud & Nancy Woodbrey, and Special Guests Landis Hudson & Nate Gray.



*Alewife Story continued from p. 6*

Rivers are ever changing and tremendously resilient. While pollution and dams have taken a tremendous toll on the health of our waterways, efforts are underway to restore them. These efforts often take years of work and collaboration, but the success can be shared by all. It takes vision, energy, and persistence to take on a river restoration project.

Back in May of 2014 more than 120 people joined us for the day-long *Maine Rivers Conference on the Kennebec: Restoring Fish for People and Wildlife* held at the Hathaway Creative Center in Waterville. The focus of the day was the future of the sea-run fisheries of the Kennebec. The day brought together representatives from state and federal fisheries agencies, local government, the NGO community, and a wide array of interested members of the public, including many of the partners that are now working on the Alewife Restoration Project (ARI) to reconnect China Lake to the Sebasticook River. There are many reasons to get involved in river and stream restoration projects. If we give alewives a chance by working to restore them to their ancestral spawning grounds, alewives can once again play an important role in bringing our rivers, lakes, estuaries and oceans back to life. I look forward to talking with many of you about the ARI project at the upcoming China Lake Association annual meeting. As David Brower wrote, “We must begin thinking like a river if we are to leave a legacy of beauty and life for future generations.”

*~ Landis Hudson is the executive director of Maine Rivers. The mission of Maine Rivers is to protect, restore and enhance the ecological health of Maine’s river systems. Landis grew up in a family of long distance lake swimmers. ~*



## China Region Lakes Alliance News

by Jim Hart, CRLA

The China Region Lakes Alliance (CRLA) was founded in 1995 by the Lake Associations of China Lake, Three Mile Pond, and Webber Pond, along with the Towns of Vassalboro, Windsor, and China, and the Kennebec Water District. The idea is to cooperate on common projects that are designed to protect and improve water quality in our member lakes. This pools resources and talent, which saves time and money to the benefit of our community and lakes. Notably, the CRLA was the first regional lake alliance in the State of Maine. Now, there are five other regional lakes organizations in the State that have adopted similar models and rationale.

For the first time in fifty years, Webber Pond enjoyed clean, clear water quality in 2014 without any algae bloom. Repeat: **No algae bloom** on Webber Pond - a CRLA member lake – last year!

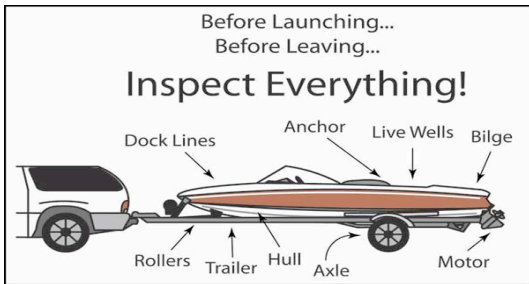
As reported in the 2014 CLA newsletter, CRLA was noticing remarkable water quality improvements in 2012 and 2013 on Webber Pond that coincided precisely with the opening of its denil fish ladder in 2011 and the subsequent full restoration of sea-run alewife fishery to their historic habitat in those successive years. To ignore this correlation would neglect the sad history of Webber Pond and be incongruous.

CRLA’s top priority is to improve water quality in China Lake and is leading the effort to restore alewives. CRLA is working shoulder-to-shoulder with Maine Rivers, the Sebasticook Regional Land Trust, and the Maine Department of Marine Resources to develop plans that are agreeable with the community and dam owners on the Outlet Stream to reach our goal of “unfettered fish passage into China Lake by December 31, 2018.”

# China Lake Bass Fishing Tournaments – 2015

The Department of Inland Fisheries (IF&W) monitors and regulates the number and type of contests on China Lake. The list below is taken from the IF&W's website: <http://www.maine.gov/ifw/fishing/pdfs/By%20Water20150501.pdf>

Date	ClubName	Representative	Phone	TournmentType
4/25/2015	Central Maine Bassers	Jim Lacadie	207-945-6203	Club/Weigh In
4/26/2015	Outcast Bass Club	Jeremy Van Oesen	207-649-3665	Open/Weigh In
5/9/2015	Buzzard's Luck Bass Fishing Club	Paul R. Brennan	978-667-2200	Measure Release
6/28/2015	Capital Area Bassmasters	Bob Caron	207-441-3273	Open/Weigh In
7/11/2015	Mainely Bass	Roger Laflamme Jr.	207-229-7110	Open/Weigh In
7/26/2015	Central Maine Bassmasters	Wayne Morey Sr.	207-622-0343	Open/Weigh In
10/10/2015	Waldo County Bass Addicts	Richard LaFrance	207-505-5063	Club/Weigh In
10/25/2015	Capital Area Bassmasters	Bob Caron	207-441-3273	Club/Weigh In



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