



# CHINA LAKE ASSOCIATION

Chinalakeassociation.org

*Working to improve the water quality of China Lake*

Newsletter

Volume 20, Issue 1

Summer 2007

## China Lake Association

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## Presidents Report

In my family we have an "ice-out lottery". Whoever guesses closest to the date the ice goes out on China Lake wins. This year I won with a guess of April 15<sup>th</sup>. The actual date, as assessed from our kitchen window, was April 18<sup>th</sup>. This was somewhat later than usual, it was a very cold spring, what Spring? The most unusual aspect of this past year was not the ice-out date it was the ice-in date; the date the lake skims over and then stays frozen for the winter. We have lived on China Lake for about 20 years and used to count on skating in our cove around the Thanksgiving Holiday. Recently it has been Christmas before we could skate. This year it was January 8<sup>th</sup> before the lake skimmed over and January 18<sup>th</sup> before there was enough ice to skate. As far as I can tell none of the long-time locals remember such a late freeze up. Was this an anomaly or the future? I've always said Maine could use a little warming, be it global or otherwise. Summers are too short and winters too long, but global warming and climate change can have a large impact on our lakes.

Ice cover on a lake limits sunlight penetration, slows algae growth, and helps to promote higher water oxygen concentrations. In a situation where the lake is covered with ice for a shorter period of time more algae grows, more oxygen is used and overall lake health and water clarity can decline. In China Lake about half of the phosphorus that fuels algae blooms comes from sediments in the deeper portions of the lake. This sediment phosphorus release called internal recycling occurs in late summer and fuels the annual algae blooms. The other half of the phosphorus comes from external sources such as soil runoff from roads, lawns, and driveways. Large spring and fall storms with heavy downpours can wash a lot of soil into the lake in a short period of time. Have you ever seen the many small streams and drainage areas around the lake after a 1-2 inch downpour? They are coffee colored with eroded soil and carry that soil directly to the lake. In a warming Pg. 3

Mark your calendar!

### Annual Meeting

Thurs. Aug 9th 7pm

China Primary School

Agenda:

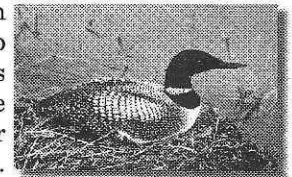
- Shorefront Revaluations
- Buffer Strip Improvement
- Water Quality

### Free Boat Tours

Sun. August 5th @ the Town Landing  
11am-2pm

## Annual Loon Count

Every year the Audubon Society organizes a state wide loon count in an effort to track the loon population in the State of Maine. On China Lake Bob O'Conner has helped organize the count for many years. This year's loon



count is on Saturday July 21<sup>st</sup>. The count starts at 7am and runs for one hour on every lake in the state where the count is done. Here in China, the lake is divided into sections and each counting team surveys their sections. Past loon Pg.3

## School on the Lake

The entire 51 students in the China Middle School fifth grade spent Wednesday June 13<sup>th</sup> studying water quality and China Lake. This annual event is jointly sponsored by the CRLA, CLA, Maine Lakes Conservancy Institute, Colby College, and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection as part of their commitment to lake education. China Lake Day's goal is to provide young students a hands on approach to learning about our lakes. With the significant help from the energetic fifth grade teachers, Susan Maroon, Bobbi Dusoe, and Dee Dee Lewis the fifth graders boarded pontoon boats bright and early at the China



Town Landing. During the on lake session the scientific equipment on the floating classroom from the MLCI enabled the students to measure water clarity, temperature, oxygen concentration and look at small lake invertebrates that are part of the lake food web. The on shore portion of the day consisted of a tour of the Kennebec Water District Filtration Plant and a session led by Peter Wilkens on invasive plants and animals. Peter pointed out that China Lake is already home to one unwelcome inhabitant, the Chinese Mystery Snail. This three inch large snail is not native to Maine lakes and may out compete our smaller native snails.

## Fund Raising Effort

The Board of Directors of the CLA have set a membership fund raising goal of \$7500 for the 2007-2008 season. Last year about \$5000 was raised through membership dues and donations. This barely meets the increasing expenses of the lake association. The directors are looking to fund more work around the lake and also have a margin of savings to be used on worthwhile projects as they arise. Funds currently go to pay for the port-a-potty at the head of lake area, funding for the CLA's share of the China Region Lakes Alliance, cost sharing for ero-

sion projects, and educational outreach. One of the rising expenses for the CLA is the cost of the weekend Courtesy Boat Inspections to prevent invasive plants such as milfoil from entering the lake. The inspections will cost at least \$1000 this year. Many times this amount could be used for education, a boat wash station, and other prevention work if it were available. If you're new to the lake and looking for a way to help out consider donating at the sponsor level or higher. A small contribution now can pay larger dividends later.

## Property Revaluation

The Town of China is in the midst of a town wide revaluation of property. Town Manager, Dan L'Heureux reported on plans for this project at our 2005 annual meeting. The revaluation is something that is mandated by the state when assessed value no longer reflects the selling price of properties. With the soaring price of shorefront properties there is now a great discrepancy between assessed value and market value. You may have a small cottage that is assessed and taxed at \$65,000 yet the market value of that cottage may be \$200,000. In a town wide revaluation all properties will be brought into line with market value, but it is the shorefront property that will probably see the largest increase in assessed value. The tax that is ultimately

paid on any property is calculated from a complex formula that takes into consideration the new town wide assessed value, revenue needs, and new projected mil rate.

The bottom line for many shorefront property owners is that when the 2008-2009 tax bills arrive there will be "sticker shock" with significant jumps in taxes due. In some parts of the state rising property values and resultant higher property tax bills are driving some families to sell their treasured vacation homes. Let's hope that doesn't happen here in China. We will have Dan L'Heureux address the annual meeting to answer any questions.

## Presidents Report

From front Page

climate, larger storms are predicted. This will mean more soil erosion and more stress on the lake. Global warming is not something that will pass China Lake by. It will have a negative impact on water quality.

We have a new addition to the China Lake Association Board of Directors, Jim Hart. Jim is an engineer by training and is the new manager of the Kennebec Water District Filtration Plant. He replaces longtime director and filtration plant manager, Jonathan Van Bourg who relocated to California. Jim has already accomplished much on behalf of China Lake and has many great ideas on how we can work to improve water quality. Jim has applied for a grant from the Maine D.E.P. in the amount of \$90,000 for lake work and we will hear about that in July. Welcome Jim!

As noted in last year's newsletter, Colby College has done a wonderful study on China Lake which continues to be used as a roadmap for lake work. The Colby Study advocated a "flushing strategy" for China Lake water level management as a way to improve water quality. This involves holding water back in the lake in early and mid summer until the algae bloom is near its peak and then releasing water from the dam to "flush" the algae out. Less algae dying and settling to the bottom of the lake means less fertilizer for next year's bloom. Longtime game warden on China Lake, Roland Tilton, managed the

China Lake dam for many years and employed just such a flushing strategy in his water level management. Roland would keep the water level higher in the summer and then release water as the bloom started. Since Roland gave up his duties 8 years ago, no effective flushing strategy has been employed. The China Selectmen briefly debated adopting a "flushing" strategy in regards to water level management but no progress was made on that discussion this winter. The past two years

***"Global warming is not something that will pass China Lake by."***

we have had unusually low water levels at the start of summer. This precludes any effective flushing of algae from the lake during the period of peak bloom. As I write this column the early June water level is where one would usually see it in mid July. Will this negatively affect water quality? We may find out in August.

Finally, I will end with my annual request for membership renewal and strong financial support for the China Lake Association. We do depend on your tax deductible dollars to help us accomplish our work on your behalf. I believe becoming a *Sponsor* of the CLA for \$100 is a small investment in your shorefront property. If you would like to help out from time to time or become a director please contact us.

### From front page **Annual Loon Count**

counts on China Lake have spotted as many as 53 loons and chicks. Last year 43 loons and chicks were counted which is in line with previous counts. If you would like to help, call Bob at 207-445-4140.

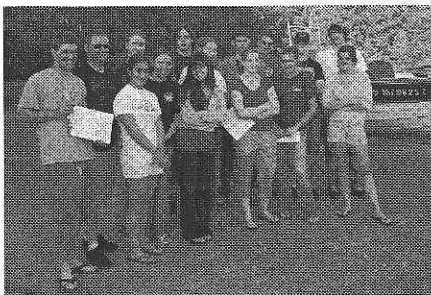
### **China Region Lakes Alliance**

The China Region Lakes Alliance (CRLA) is the umbrella organization made of the China Lake, Three Mile Pond, Webber Pond and Three Cornered Pond Associations, the Kennebec Water District, and the Towns of China, Vassalboro, and Windsor. It is

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## Courtesy Boat Inspections

In an effort to fight the spread of invasive water plants such as milfoil and nearly a dozen other plants that could devastate a lake such as China, the China Lake Association is once again helping to fund *Courtesy Boat Inspections* at the two boat launch sites. A recent training session taught 18 local youth the ins and outs of boat inspecting. China Lake will benefit from a \$2000 grant that was awarded to the China Region Lakes Alliance for use by member lake association to help prevent the spread of milfoil. Over 20 lakes in Maine already are infested with invasive water plants. How bad can things get if China is invaded?



The recent Colby College study of China Lake noted that up to 51% of China Lake is shallow enough to be affected by invasive plants. Little Sebago Lake groups will spend \$100,000 this year alone in an effort to control that lake's invasive plant problem. Invasive water plants can grow thick enough so that neither swimmers nor boaters can pass through. How would that affect your waterfront property values? If you would like to become a courtesy boat inspector or volunteer in this valuable program please call David Preston at 968-2565.

## China Regional Lake Alliance

From Third Page

through the CRLA that the erosion control projects and other lake related projects are coordinated. The CRLA is now partnering with the Kennebec County Soils and Water Conservation District (KS&W) for engineering and other technical advice. The CRLA is pleased to announce that Paul Mitnik is working for the organization in a part-time capacity. Paul spent his career with the D.E.P. and now besides working with the CRLA works for the Town of Vassalboro as their Code Enforcement Officer. Paul is a great addition to the CRLA and will be a great help around the four lake area.

Currently, the CRLA is doing erosion control projects in the China Lake area under a D.E.P. grant receives in 2005. As noted in the *President's Report*, a new grant has been applied for, so hopefully there will be cost share money available going forward. In 2006 nine cost share projects were done in the China Lake watershed as

part of the 319 Grant Program. Those projects were camp road improvement and stabilization projects aimed at reducing soil erosion and runoff into the lake. The D.E.P. sponsored programs are all aimed at improving lake health and water quality. The work was done on Fire Roads 12, 14, 15, 28, 34, 35, 38, and 48. A late season completion on Fire Road 18 was also done which has significantly reduced soil washing into the lake. The Fire Road 18 project illustrates a number of important characteristics that the CRLA looks for before committing money to a project. There is a motivated property owner, Dick Willette who is willing to organize the other road property owners. There is the willingness and ability to share in the cost of the project and most importantly the site is a source of pollution to the lake in the form of soil erosion and runoff. The Fire Road 18 project also illustrates one of the features that will become more common as the CRLA looks to make a more significant reduction in non-point source pollution (NPS) to China Lake, that is larger more complex projects divided into phases. On Fire Road 18 the full project will probably be three phases and be done over several years with the design input from the KS&W.

In addition to grant financed projects, town money is used to offset the cost of work that is done. Work done by the Youth Conservation Corp (YCC) is paid for through town funds. In China we are fortunate that municipal officials and the taxpayers appreciate the benefits of investing in lake related projects. Out of state property owners can see some of their tax money returned to them through town financed lake related projects. Last year the YCC worked on seven sites around China Lake. This is in addition to the nine fire road sites. The YCC is working on stabilizing the shorefront at the Head of Lake area next to the *Landing*. Look for the new blue signs around the lake's watershed that mark CRLA work sites.

For 2007 several larger projects are in the works at press time and we hope to share more information about them at the China Lake Association Annual Meeting. If you have an erosion issue on your shorefront property or anywhere in the China Lake watershed please call or email Peter Wilkens our Conservation Corp Director to arrange a free site evaluation. Peter can be reached at: [peterwilkens@gmail.com](mailto:peterwilkens@gmail.com) or on his cell phone 660-5270.

### *In Memoriam*

George Willis Lord

1944-2007

The China Lake Association sadly acknowledges the unexpected death of a dear friend, George Lord. Mr. Lord passed away unexpectedly at his home on February 10, 2007. George was the driving force behind the China Lake Restoration Project which began in 1990. He served as the first Executive Director of the China Region Lakes Alliance from 1992 to 1996. With his vision and energy the China Lake Restoration Project became a model of cooperative effort between town, state, and federal government working to address lake water quality issues. Dozens of communities around the state have adopted the model George developed here in China including the innovative youth conservation corp. It was George's idea to involve local youth in lake restoration projects, providing summer employment working on China Lake while learning conservation and lake restoration methods.

## Things You Can Do...To Protect the Lake

It has been shown that lake front property value is determined by water quality. Improve water quality and property values rise, degrade water quality and property values decline. A property on China Lake is a valuable asset. Take the time to learn how to protect your investment by protecting water quality. Here are 5 suggestions.

1. **Avoid all phosphorus containing fertilizers.** Phosphorus drives the algae blooms.
2. **Improve your shoreline buffer strip.** Lawns allow more soil runoff than natural vegetation. Try not cutting the 10-15 feet of lawn closest to the lake or ask for a buffer strip consult from the CRLA.
3. **Have you shoreline septic system holding tank pumped every 2-3 years.** This improves the life of your system.
4. **Form a camp road association to better maintain your road.** A well maintained road is less likely to erode and contribute phosphorus to the lake. The CLA has information on how to do this.
5. **Join the China Lake Association and help us work to protect water quality.** Your tax deductible contribution will be used to continue water quality protection work.

### China Lake Association contact information:

**General association issues:** David Landry, President -968-2856 [david.landry@yahoo.com](mailto:david.landry@yahoo.com)

**Membership/contributions:** Bruce Daniels.,Treasurer-968-2667

[RPH968@hotmail.com](mailto:RPH968@hotmail.com)

**Milfoil Patrol/volunteers:** David Preston- 968-2565

[onthelake@fairpoint.net](mailto:onthelake@fairpoint.net)

**China Region Lakes Alliance,** erosion control and buffer strip questions: Peter Wilkens 660-5270.

[peterwilkens@gmail.com](mailto:peterwilkens@gmail.com)

**Lake Day Boat Tours:** Augie Velton– 968-3307

[avelton@finsvcs.com](mailto:avelton@finsvcs.com)



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**Help us improve water quality!**

**Membership Form**

**China Lake Association**

Please renew my annual membership  
 I am a new member

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Family Membership: \$25

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Friend: \$35

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Patron: \$50

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor: \$100

Benefactor: \$500

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make check payable to China Lake Association and Mail to PO Box 6215, China Village, ME. 04926*

*Thank you very much for your tax deductible contribution!*

**Reminder: China Lake Maps available for \$5.00 from the China Town Office.**