

China's Pride  
Keep It Alive

# CHINA LAKE ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

Volume 15, Issue 1

Summer 2002

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## President's Report

**This is my last report** to you as president of the China Lake Association. What began as a 2 year commitment in 1992 has stretched to a decade. It has been a great honor to serve and work with the many people that have made this organization so effective. I look back at many of the accomplishments and recognize that it is really the dedication of the people in China and their great desire to see a clean China Lake that has allowed us the measure of success we have enjoyed.

The list of accomplishments for the CLA include being a part of the first comprehensive lake restoration project in the State of Maine, organizing an ongoing camp road and buffer strip improvement program, founding the China Region Lakes Alliance. The China Region Lakes Alliance model is now being copied around the state as a means for multiple lake groups and towns to pool their resources to fund ongoing lake work. Through the combined efforts of many over 200 lake related projects that decrease phosphorus runoff into China Lake have been completed in the last ten years.

The big questions that all of us ask are: When will we see a dramatic improvement in the lake water quality? Will we ever see crystal clear water again? I surely don't know the answers, but I do know that China Lake water quality has stabilized at a time when other lakes are seeing declining water quality. Having a comprehensive plan and actively working to reduce sources of pollution is what we can do and the rest involves waiting and keeping our fingers crossed.

Many wonder what impact water levels have on water quality. There has been ongoing debate since 1995 regarding this with the lake association being actively involved. The Board of Environment Protection has decided to hold another water level hearing in the Summer of 2003 here in China. It is important that the China Lake Association does not become the China Lake water level association by focusing on water levels too much. I remember what a valued advisor to the lake association, Roy Bouchard of the DEP, told me in 1995 at the start of the water level controversy. He cautioned not to get too wrapped up in the water level debate since water levels in China Lake have a less dramatic impact than one would think, and no matter what water level is set, many will not get the exact water level they wanted. With that said, I would urge everyone to become educated and stay abreast of the water level issue.

In closing I would like to thank the directors of the China Lake Association for their support and note with sadness the loss of Andre Boutin this past year. Andre had been a director continuously since the founding of the CLA in 1987 and provided great wisdom regarding what the mission of the CLA should be. Also, I could not have communicated with you without the talents of Janet Preston, our newsletter editor. The China Lake Association will be in good hands with Glenn Healey, the incoming president, and our dedicated board. Thank you.

David Landry, president CLA

## David Halliwell to speak at CLA Annual Meeting

Tuesday, August 13  
7:00 pm  
China Middle School

David Halliwell of the DEP will discuss the recent extensive study of China Lake. We will also be celebrating Dave Landry's many accomplishments in his ten years as President of the China Lake Association. Join us for refreshments afterwards.

# China Lake Water Quality Report 2001-2002

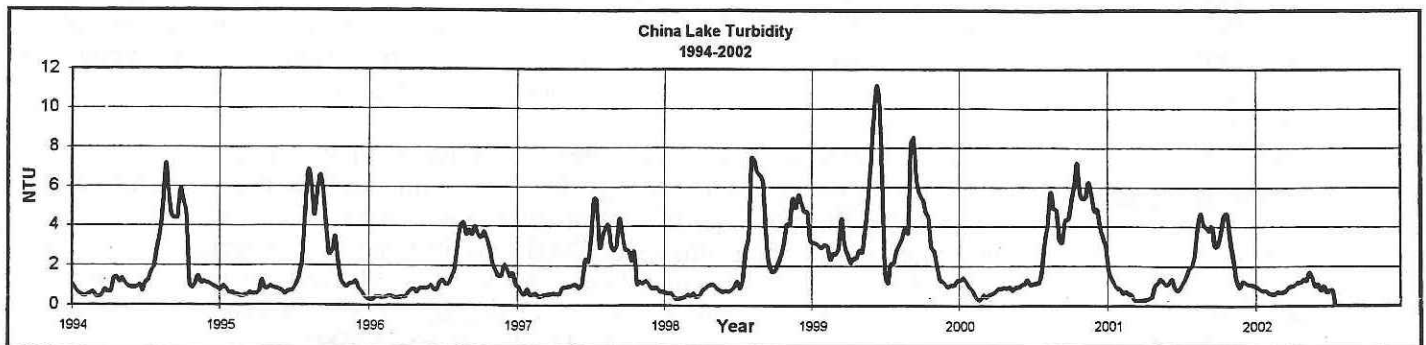
By Jonathan Van Bourg

Last year China Lake water quality, monitored by the Kennebec Water District, was very similar to the previous year, although the algae bloom began slightly later than in 2000. Basically, China Lake has been in a stable state since 1992, with the exception of 1999, when there was a bloom of *Aphanizomenon* algae through the winter which caused a serious but brief decline in water quality. Last year the lake water stratified (separated into layers) one week later than in 2000 and when it bloomed, it first turned green in the West basin. The phosphorus readings were slightly higher than the previous year and the Chlorophyll A readings were slightly lower.

There is a continued increase in Zooplankton population which is a good indicator of improving water quality but the populations are fragile. We have also heard from Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife (IF&W) that there is a greater diversity in size of the white perch population, instead of only the usual small perch being caught.

At present there has been plenty of rain but no real gully washers. This is very good because it is the gully washers that cause most of the erosion that transports phosphorus to the Lake. Phosphorus is the nutrient that causes the algae to bloom. The lake is now full in spite of forecast "drought conditions."

If we do have a dry summer, then most likely China Lake will bloom more intensely than in 2001 but not until mid September. As of mid July, water quality is still slightly better than last year. We have found 7 meter secchi disk readings (a clarity measure) in the West basin. This is much better than in the past. All basins are stratified and the North basin is already anoxic (no oxygen) below the thermocline. There are some signs of algae bloom in southern coves of the West basin, but when the algae is analyzed it is found to be mostly a mix of diatoms and some *Melosira*. (The presence of various plant species provides a balance and results in a healthy lake.) If this summer becomes wet and overcast then lake water quality will continue a pattern of gradual improvement.



**Check Out Our Website**  
[www.chinalakeassociation.org](http://www.chinalakeassociation.org)

**Mark your calendar! - CLA Annual Meeting - Tuesday, August 13, China Middle School**

## Conservation Corps Back To Work

by Reb Manthey

The summer work season started June 17th with a brief orientation and then the China's Conservation Corps went right to work on a rip-rap job. It was drizzling and the lake was cold, but they have come back every day since. In the first week they have moved 42 tons of stone, 1/2 ton of slope stabilizer, loam and mulch, and planted several shrubs. Each of the two Corps is made up of 6 high school students, under the leadership of an experienced Supervisor, Katie Pfeiffer and Chris Bennett. Rick Blackwell (with 4 years of erosion control experience) will be helping the Corps leaders, as well as providing technical assistance to landowners and road associations. Reb Manthey is still directing the entire operation.

The Corps does erosion control work throughout the watershed, free of charge. Landowners need only to pay for materials. We have placed a lot of stone along shorelines. We would like to plant more shrubs and other plants to help absorb runoff water. So if you have been thinking about planting a vegetated buffer, but don't have the time and energy, we'll do it for you.

Give us a call at 445-5021 if you would like information, advice or free labor about drainage, erosion control, water quality or similar subjects.

### Camp Road Project Update

This is the second year of a project to repair camp roads around China, Three Mile and Webber Pond. The project provides 50% cost-share to landowners. So far we have worked on 11 roads, with projects ranging from installing waterbars to total rebuilds of the road and ditches. Work is scheduled on 5 more roads this summer. But we still have approximately \$1000 per lake left to give away. So if your camp road could use some help, contact Reb at 445-5021.

## CLA Sets Goal of \$5,000

by David Landry

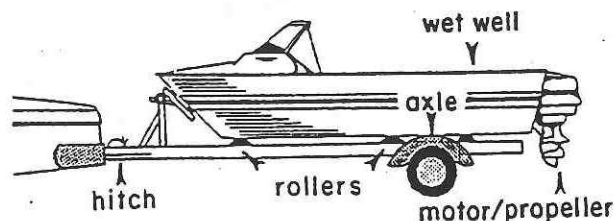
The year 2001 was the most successful year the China Lake Association has had as far as lake related projects go. Working with our parent organization the China Region Lakes Alliance, twenty-four lake related projects were completed - a new record! This included 5 camp road projects, 9 shore front projects, 4 highway projects, 3 upland slope stabilization projects, 2 wetland plantings, and assisting with erosion control at the China Baptist Church beach. Since 1990, over 200 sites have been addressed in the China Lake watershed, a noteworthy accomplishment.

The key to our success has been the Lake Association's ability to assist landowners by partially funding projects as an incentive to have improvements made that will benefit all that use the lake. While we have been very successful at getting lake projects done, we feel the need to increase the time and effort we spend on getting our members to renew their membership and make contributions to the Lake Association. Our ability to make continued improvements in the watershed depends on your contributions and membership renewal. We have projects for the Summer of 2002 but we do need money to fund them.

Remember, your waterfront property is perhaps one of your most important investments. Volunteers in the China Lake Association are eager to do the work around the lake but we need your contributions to make it happen. The China Lake Association is working to raise \$5000. Use the form on the back of this newsletter to join today. Please consider increasing your donation to keep the work progressing. Thank you!

## PREVENT WATERMILFOIL FROM INFESTING OUR LAKES - IT'S THE LAW!

- Carefully clean your boat, trailer, propeller, and fishing equipment thoroughly.
- Dispose of plants on high, dry ground where they will not be washed away.
- Report any possible occurrences of milfoil to the China Region Lakes Alliance at 445-5021.



## China Lake Loon Count 2002

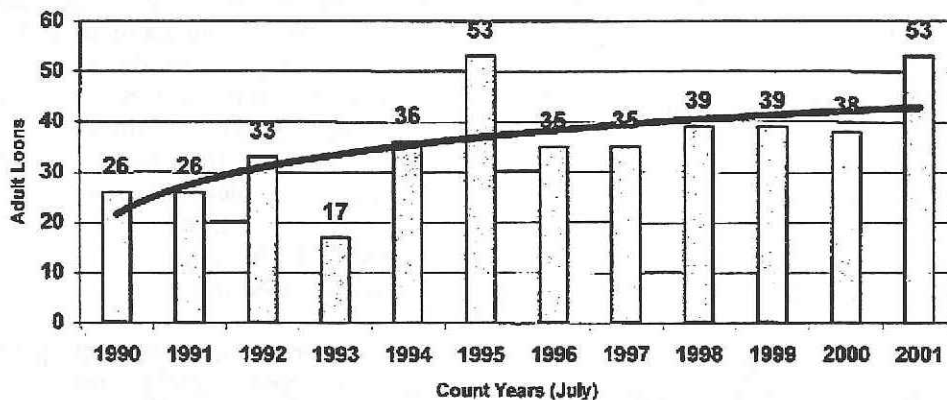
by Bob OConnor

People who visit China Lake in the summer often get to enjoy musical solos and occasionally a chorus of the melodic and haunting call of the Loon. The Maine Loon Project of the Audubon Society is a state wide effort to protect and study the treasured loons. The Society organizes an annual state wide effort to count loons on over 264 lakes and ponds in Maine.

Bob O'Connor coordinates the count for China Lake and checks to be sure no loon is counted twice. This year the count was held on Saturday, July 20th at 7am. Eight volunteer groups of loon counters covered eight sections of China Lake. Volunteers included Tim Hendris, Gerry Boyle, Barbara and George Scanlan, Nelson, Bonnie and Fred Glidden, Pat Nawfel, Fred Fitzgerald, Tom and Martha Hicks, and Julie Hoogeveen. Results for this year's loon count were not available at the time of publication but 2001 was a record year: 1 baby and 52 adult loons were counted.

**Protect and enjoy our wonderful loons!** If you see any injured or dead loons or if you suspect a loon nest has been abandoned, as a first step, please call Susan at the Maine Loon Project at 781-6180 Ext 216. More Loon details and ongoing information about lake issues can be found at the China Lake Association's website at [www.chinalakeassociation.org](http://www.chinalakeassociation.org).

The graph below shows a slight increase in the loon population over the past 12 years.



## Spread the Word, Not the Trash

by Jonathan Van Bourg

All of Maine's Lakes, Great Ponds and Streams are public property even though most of the shoreline is privately owned. Access to China Lake is available at three public boat launches, one at the West Basin on Route 32 with extra parking available near the old Vassalboro School and at the north end of the East Basin with parking available along the road. There is also a very shallow boat launch at the Southern end owned by the Town of China, that can accommodate one or two boats at most. These boat launches are open to the public and the two larger boat launches were established by the Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Conservation and the communities of Vassalboro and China. Unfortunately all public boat launches and other public areas are only sporadically maintained if at all. Bassmasters is providing trash cans at the boat launches and many local residents help regularly with the clean up but a few of the people who use our public areas often leave piles of trash and empty bottles.

If we see trash in the public areas around the lake and pick it up then we are encouraging others to do the same. Trash bags are now a routine part of our boating gear and we rarely return without a full bag. Bradley Island in the West basin has been well maintained this year, but last year someone cut down almost a dozen trees to build camp fires. Indian Island, a popular camping spot, is often littered with broken bottles and dirty toilet paper. The picnic area at the narrows was a mess after this Fourth of July - we removed two full trash bags of paper plates, beer cans and broken bottles. *Carry in, carry out* seems like a simple idea; if we carry out for others, then maybe they will catch on. Please be considerate so we all enjoy our beautiful lake and its environment. **Spread the word, not the trash.**

### The Dam Level of China Lake By Bob OConnor

The water level of China Lake is controlled by the outlet dam in the village of East Vassalboro. It is managed by the Town of Vassalboro. Water levels can be controversial! Over the years there have been various public meetings and Board of Environmental Protection meetings to discuss the best water level management. Rather than discuss the merits of a lower, higher or unchanged water level, this article will show the Dam and it's components and how you can determine the lake level from your own shoreline property.

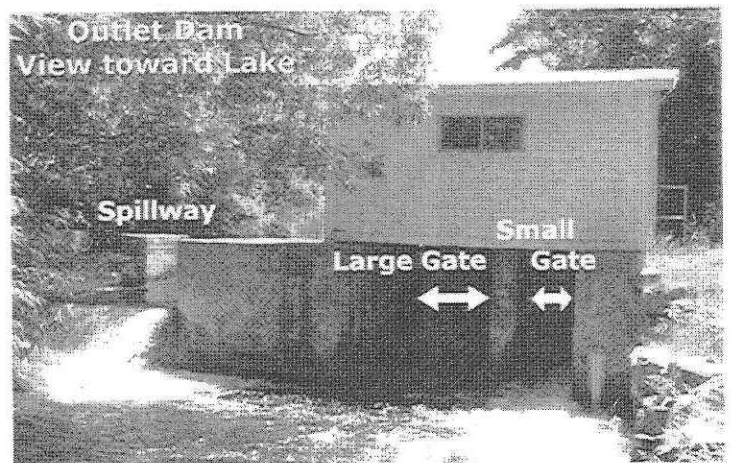
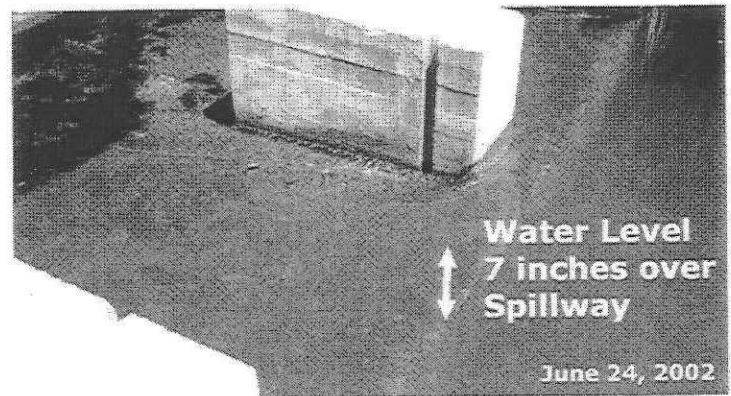
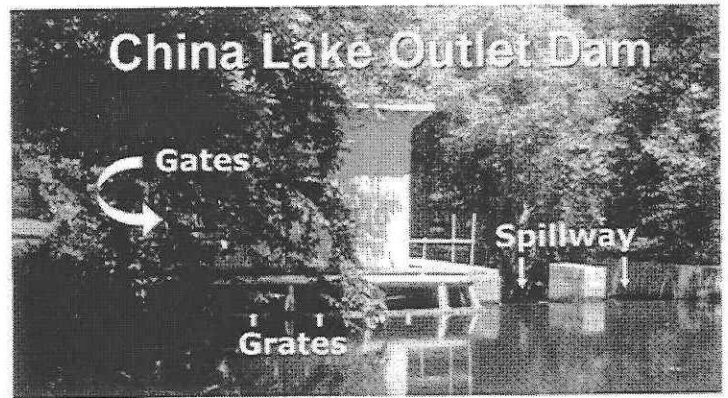
The China Lake Outlet Dam is located behind the old brick school, now the Vassalboro Historical Society building on Main Street in East Vassalboro. It is a couple hundred feet from China Lake on the Outlet stream.

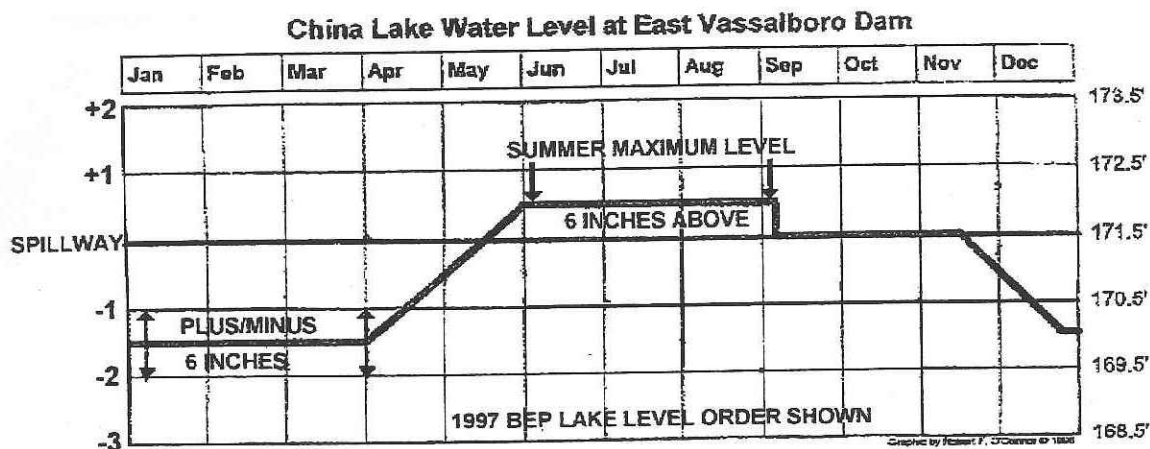
Most references to the lake level are based on the water level at the Spillway. If the water is just about to flow over the spillway it is "at spillway".

If the water is flowing over the spillway, one can measure the vertical height to the water surface from the leading edge of the spillway. The picture shows the water level at 7" over the spillway in late June.

When the level is below the spillway one can measure from the spillway edge down to the water surface.

The wooden gates in the Dam building are used to control the lake level. There is a large gate and a small gate. The gates are opened from the bottom to allow various flow levels to lower the lake level or maintain a specific level.



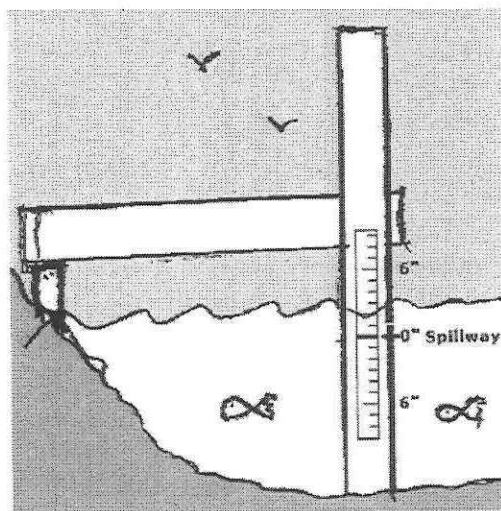


The Board of Environmental Protection wrote the 1997 Order stating the target lake level and water flow rates in the Outlet stream. The graph shows the target levels over 12 months. During the summer, the Order calls for a Maximum water level of 6" above the spillway, in the fall, at spillway or below, then draw drawdown to the winter level of one to two feet below the spillway, and after iceout, refill.

Make your own Dam Stick and know the lake level while at home! Take two 12 inch rulers or mark a stick with inch measurements with the midpoint as zero inches.

On a calm day, go to the dam and determine the current water level. This level is the same all around the lake. Mount the dam stick on your dock at the same level as measured at the dam. Then, on a day to day basis you will know the lake level without leaving home. You can use the Graph to plot the actual level for your own records.

Bob OConnor can be reached by email at [bob@rocnnet.com](mailto:bob@rocnnet.com)



Lake level is shown on the dam measuring stick mounted on a private dock and shows an approximate water level of 3" above the spillway.

## Bassmasters Help With Lake Cleanup

by David Landry

China Lake is one of the best bass lakes in the State of Maine with a number of club and open tournaments held on the lake every year. There are two type of bass tournaments held on the lake. The large gatherings are "open tournaments" and are limited to 5 per year. This type of competition can see up to 60 two-person teams competing for a top prize of over \$1000. The State of Maine has a lottery system to assign the limited number of dates for this type of fishing event. During an open competition the bass are kept in a live well on the boats and brought to the weigh-in site at the end of the day. Usually only 7 fish are allowed from each boat with awards being given for highest 7-fish cumulative weight, and heaviest large and small mouth bass. The second type of fishing event is the club tournament involving only a single club and an honor system of fish measurement with no end-of-tournament weigh-in. There is no limit to the number of these events on the lake.

The Central Maine Bassmasters Tournament was held on China Lake on June 22 with 55 teams competing for over \$10,000 in prize money. The winning large mouth bass was caught by John Farrand of Lewiston tipping the scales at 7 lb 2 oz. (see photo). The winning 7-fish total was 231lb,13oz. Of the 200 plus fish that were brought in for weighing, all but 4 were released alive. Tournament rules penalize teams for any fish that die. The weigh-in for these large tournaments usually are held at Willow Beach Camps or at the China Lake Conference Center and make for great learning for anyone trying to improve their fishing skills. The bass fishermen and women are friendly and helpful in regards to tackle and technique. Local bass clubs take an active interest in the lakes they fish. Classic Bassmasters, a club out of Winthrop with local members, has done much volunteer work in the China Lake Area. The club sponsored a spring lake cleanup in which 50 large trash bags of garbage and debris were collected from around the lake. Anyone visiting the public landing areas will also note the attractive and handy trash containers the club has placed and maintains.

The June 22nd tournament weigh-in provided State of Maine Fishery Biologist Jim Lucas an opportunity to inspect and measure hundreds of fish before their release. His observation was that the China Lake bass are healthy and plentiful! Lucas discussed the fact that it would take about 3 days for the bass to return to their territory around the lake. Three thousand 8-10 inch brown trout were placed in the lake in early April along with several dozen 4-5 pound brook trout. Mr Lucas discussed the fact that pike were showing up in Central Maine lakes due to illegal stocking but no confirmed catch of these large fish has occurred in China.

Anyone wishing to get some real professional advise on the local fishing should spend a day with China resident and bass fishing guide Dave Barnes. His local phone is 445-4627. Another place for advice and tackle is Elmer's Tackle on Route 3 towards Augusta. Elmer's is directly across the street from the Harley-Davidson Shop.



*Classic Bassmasters Conservation Project 2002 - shown left to right: Ron White, Tim White, Ken Bergeron and kids, Tom Bergeron, Bill Centra, Bernie Mayo, Dan Phillips, Skip Hinckley. Photo by Dave Barnes, Sr.*

## Seventh Graders Go Fishing

by Charlie Hartman

If you happened to drive by the head of the lake on Friday June 7th, you would have been surprised to see about 60 students fishing with great enthusiasm. It was the entire 7th grade of China Middle School.

The event was put together by 7th grade Science teacher Ron Maxwell and Charlie Hartman, whose son Alec, a 7th grader, is an avid fisherman. The students spent the morning fishing at the head of the lake and working on a variety of weather and lake related science projects at Willow Beach, including a boat-building competition. In the afternoon, the students went by bus to 15-Mile Stream in Albion, where they watched the release of the Atlantic Salmon fry they hatched from eggs in their classroom this spring.

Many of the China students had never fished before in their lives, and they enjoyed the experience to the fullest. During the morning, over 30 fish were caught and released, mostly sunfish. But to the great surprise of Jennifer Lessard, who was fishing from the new dock with a worm and a bobber, she caught a 15-inch small mouth bass! She was some proud.

Jennifer, of course, won the competition for largest fish. The winners for smallest fish were Amy Fredrickson and Alec Hartman, each of whom scooped up some minnows that were 1 cm long. The winners of the best boat competition were the team of Devon Kierstead and Tamara Parker.

The day was a great success, and the students learned a lot about their lake. The seventh grade teachers hope to make the China Lake Fishing Day an annual event.

## Lake Lessons Teach Kids They Can Make a Difference

by Anita Smith, China Middle School

China Lake is at the heart of our town. Most of us see it every day. We swim in it, fish in it, boat on it, and appreciate its beauty. A large part of the fifth grade science curriculum relates in some way to China Lake and its importance to our community. Throughout the school year, students learn valuable lessons and pass these lessons on to their families and friends in the China Lake area. Students learn to take an active role in caring for our lake.

Each fall, the school year begins with a unit about wetlands. Students study the ecosystem of the school pond. They learn to identify the plants and animals of the pond and study the importance and functions of wetlands. They study different wetlands in the world and can compare the characteristics of each wetland type. They study the macroinvertebrates in the pond and determine the pond's health based on their data. They learn to be scientists by DOING science.

We had many guest speakers visit our classroom this year from several organizations interested in preserving healthy lakes. Amanda Blodgett and Jessica Lincoln, Americorps volunteers, brought a watershed model to demonstrate what a watershed is, how pollutants drain into watersheds, and how important buffer strips are in preventing *non-point source* pollutants, such as soil erosion, malfunctioning septic systems, and gas and oil run-off, from seeping into the lake. Amanda returned to our classroom in the spring to talk about invasive water milfoil. We learned about the different native and non-native aquatic plants and why we need to clean off our boats and trailers carefully when we move them in and out of the water; once Eurasian milfoil or other invasive plants get into our lakes, it's impossible to get rid of them.

Mary Ann McGarry and Warren Miskell visited us from the Maine Lakes Conservancy Institute ([www.mlci.org](http://www.mlci.org)). Our school has formed a partnership with MLCI as a pilot school. MLCI's mission is to promote lake ecology and economics. We are VERY fortunate to be a part of this program! MaryAnn shared stories from her recent trip to the island of Cyprus, where she worked with students to teach them about water issues. The island faces the serious problem of not having enough fresh water for its citizens. We learned not to take fresh water for granted! In preparation for our annual Lake Day, Warren showed us some of the equipment we would be using in our exploration of China Lake.

This spring, we had a visit from Jocelyn Hubbell from Maine Audubon, who presented *Lakes and Loons*. We learned the difference between lakes and ponds and also about lake layering (stratification) during the different seasons. She taught us a lot about Maine loons including body characteristics, adaptations, and the many threats to the loons.

We also participated in the *Town Line's* Ice-Out contest. After studying previous ice-out data and discussing the current weather patterns, we made predictions for the ice out date. TWO of our 5th graders, Tara

*Lake Lessons - continued from p. 8*

Trask and Ethan Wall, won the contest! Several students also submitted entries in poster contests for Clean Water Week.

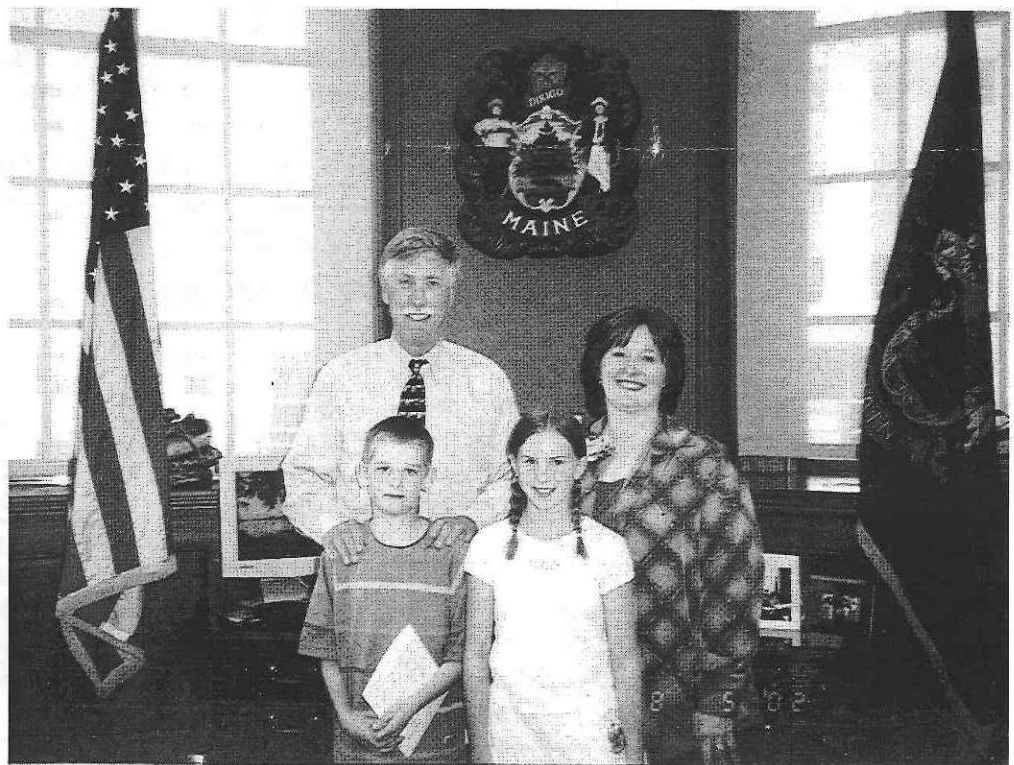
The rainy spring weather didn't cooperate with our 5th annual "Lake Day" this year, so we went with the flow and moved many of the activities indoors. The students had several guest presenters including Reb Manthey from the China Region Lakes Alliance, Christine Smith from Maine DEP, and MaryAnn McGarry and Warren Miskell from the Maine Lakes Conservancy Institute. We spent half of our day doing hands-on lessons that taught about the history of China Lake from the Native Americans to modern times, looked at aerial photographs and maps of the area, learned about lake stratification and also studied plankton and macroinvertebrates from China Lake using a microscope hooked up to a TV screen. We spent the other half of our day touring the Kennebec Water District Treatment Plant to learn about how the water is treated so people can drink it. Even though China homes don't use the water for drinking, many people do and that what we do in China affects the drinking water for people in many local towns and cities.

The students learned that our actions have an impact on others in the watershed - even if we don't live right by the lake. They understand they can make a difference by helping to planting buffer strips, respecting the loon's habitat, encouraging people to clean their boats carefully, and cleaning up around the lake. They learned to appreciate how fortunate we are to live by a beautiful lake and how important it is to protect it.

Children learn best when they participate in real-life, hands-on lessons. The 5th grade "water education" program at China Middle School expands and improves each year. People across the state are learning about the success we're having. By teaching about wetland ecosystems and conservation, watershed protection, loon education and water quality issues, our students are will become active stewards of this valuable resource. We would like to thank the MANY volunteers who help to make our program a success. We appreciate the support that the China Lake Association and the Kennebec Water District have given us for the last five years and we hope our partnership is a long-lived one.

To learn more about our water education activities, visit the "Lake Lessons" link at our school webpage [www.china-ms.u52.k12.me.us/~asmith](http://www.china-ms.u52.k12.me.us/~asmith)

*Middle School teacher Anita Smith receives the New England EPA Environmental Educator Award presented by Governor King. With her are fifth grade students Jacob Rollins and Stephanie Smith.*





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Many of us have a new address. Please help us update our database by sending us the change. (If you have a China Village P.O. Box, you do not need to notify us.) Send corrections to CLA, P.O. Box 6215, China Village, ME 04926. Thank you for your cooperation!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Old Address:**

**New Address:**

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

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ST: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

*Memberships renewals are due . Please use the form below if you have not yet sent yours in. Thank You!*

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**  
**China Lake Association**

Please renew my annual membership .

I am a new member.

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

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*Please make check payable to China Lake Association and mail to P.O. Box 6215, China Village, ME 04926.*

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