

This is a printer friendly version of an article from www.fosters.com
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Aug 19, 2010

Concern aired as phosphorous taints lake

Meredith:

Members of the Lake Winnepesaukee Watershed Association spent much of their 34th annual meeting Wednesday night discussing how to get the message out to not "P" — as in use phosphorous — in the Big Lake.

Limiting or preventing phosphorous runoff into Lake Winnepesaukee is a large part of Association's Lake Winnepesaukee Watershed Management Plan, which was recently developed by the association, the Lakes Region Planning Commission and the North Country Resource Conservation and Development Council.

"Without the lake we are sunk, we are absolutely sunk," Dan Anderson, outgoing president of the association said. "Nobody will want to come here if the lake is pea green and not that crystal blue."

Anson said the Watershed Management Plan was funded through money from the state Department of Environmental Services, the federal Environmental Protection Agency, with some secondary funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Pat Tarpey, a member of both the North Country Conservation and Development Council and the Lakes Region Planning Commission, gave a presentation on the Management Plan, the first phase of which involves educating and addressing the concerns of the core lake communities of Meredith, Laconia, Gilford.

The phased plan will focus on four major groups of communities around the entire lake during the next several years.

Tarpey said we need to protect Lake Winnepesaukee for many reasons, including the fact that it serves as a drinking water supply in some communities, including Laconia, it provides recreation; draws tourism and is aesthetically beautiful.

"We want to protect water quality for the long term, protect its natural beauty and its economic vitality," Tarpey said.

She said phosphorous, which enters the lake through runoff from and erosion from the land, can ruin a lake's natural beauty and safety as a water supply, which would in turn have a negative impact on the local tourism industry.

Increased phosphorous levels in lakes accelerates algae growth, including dangerous cyanobacteria blooms, which are also responsible for turning lake water a sickly, light shade of green. It also encourages the growth of milfoil.

Such effects would cause steep decline in swimming and boating on the lake, a drop in lakeshore property values and increased public expenses to get rid of problems such as algae blooms and milfoil.

Tarpey said while phosphorous is a natural occurring element and is part the makeup of New Hampshire soil, human activity is also responsible for its increase, including overdevelopment or improper development, not buffering runoff, having septic systems too close to the lake and using fertilizers and pesticides with phosphorous.

Tarpey said the State Department of Environmental Services recently established phosphorous limits for different types of New Hampshire lakes.

Lake Winnepesaukee should have phosphorous levels no higher than 8 micrograms per liter, Tarpey said, adding that the current average is 6 micrograms per liter. Before 1998, the average phosphorous levels in the lake were only 4.9 micrograms per liter.

With the new state regulation, Tarpey said if levels in Lake Winnepesaukee do go over 8 micrograms per liter, the state could impose restrictions, including banning all future lake development.

The "Don't 'P' in the Lake Campaign," which has been a success around Lake Waukegan, was discussed by Randy Eifert, a member of the Lake Waukegan Watershed Board of Directors.

He said he would like to see the campaign or similar versions of it "go around the lake."

Eifert said the campaign not only focused on getting property owners not use fertilizers containing phosphorous, but not to use pesticides as well, especially for lawn care.

The Lake Waukegan Watershed Management group was started five years ago to help protect Meredith's town water supply and another tourist destination in the area.

In educating the public, Eifert said his committee created three education fliers in mailed out and they created signs, currently available at Town Hall, that people can put on their properties indicate their lawns and gardens are phosphorous and pesticide free.

He said they also visited local hardware and lawn and garden centers to encourage them to sell fertilizers with no phosphorous in them.

"What we learned is that most lawns in New Hampshire have soil that is phosphorous rich, so people don't have to add any," Eifert said.

Finally Steve Kahl, the association's new president and an environmental professor at the University of New Hampshire, gave a presentation on another way to stop phosphorous runoff.

"For 10,000 years, we had an ecosystem that was relatively in balance, and then we came along and started changing things," Kahl said.

The worst changes we made were unbridled early development and the clearing of forests and native plants around the lake.

"Clean water comes from our forests," Kahl said, explaining that the trees, shrubs and other native plants act as the best filter there is for water going into a lake or other fresh water body.

"Therefore land use, especially near the lake is key to saving Lake Winnepesaukee," Kahl said.

The association also announced a new partnership with the New Hampshire Lakes Association,

"Some of the things we do are similar, and some things are different, but if we can combine resources where we can, we'll be more effective," Anson said.

During the business portion of the meeting, outgoing board-members were given gifts of recognition and new members and officers were announced.

Anson is stepping down as president because he's reached the two-term limit and will now service as first vice president. Steve Kahl will be the new president.

The Association was started in the late 70s, as a nonprofit, volunteer organization focused on maintaining and improving natural resources around the lake and working with the lake communities.

"We are the people who are trying to protect the lake, Dean Anson, outgoing president of the association, said. "We know it's a balance between development and preserving water quality."
