Maranacook Lake News

STOCK TALK

FISH EDITION

On June 18th, 2025, Maranacook Lake was stocked with 350 landlocked Salmon at 8" long. Help keep illegal fish out of our lake! Use legal bait fish only.

Learn More About Maine's Fish Hatcheries

WINGS OVER WATER

BE A LOON COUNTER

Maine Audubon LOON COUNT Est. 1983

CLICK THE LOON FOR VIDEO

LINES IN THE LAKE

SPECIAL FISHING LAWS

MARANACOOK LAKE, Readfield, Winthrop (South Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: S-2 (Closed to the taking of smelts, except by hook and line), S-3 (Direct tributaries closed to the taking of smelts). From October 1 - December 31: ALO (Artificial lures only), S-7 (All trout, landlocked salmon, and togue caught must be released alive at once).

Friends on the 4th 5k Race__A Huge Success!

MLA significantly benefited from **partnering with Watershed Friends** for this event that raised more than $12,000. This year's race proved to be a wonderful success thanks to our **MANY volunteers and participants**. A record **607 runners and walkers** participated, along with many cheerleaders. Thank you to everyone who spent the day with us. It's heartwarming to see our community coming together for this race each year!

Special shout out to Peter Washburn, Cami and Doug Wilbert for organizing and managing the race. We also appreciate the American Legion for providing the space at no cost and Mike Curley for his dedication on race day, who is the first one there and the last one to leave.

A Message from the President

What a summer! Once we made it through a very wet spring (especially on weekends), we had an incredibly beautiful stretch of weather, including early Fall. I hope everyone was able to enjoy central Maine, and especially Maranacook Lake! Whether you're a swimmer, water skier, paddle boarder, or you just like to relax by the water, this summer cooperated in a wonderful way.

The down side to having so many sunny days of course, is that we have had very little rain. Here are the totals according to the Cobbossee Watershed District, who keeps the totals at their office in Winthrop.
June total: 2.86 inches
July total: 1.47 inches (3rd lowest July ppt in 50 years)
August total: 2.21 inches
September 1-12: 1.26 inches

Here is a link to an article in the Kennebec Journal from mid-September regarding the drought: https://www.centralmaine.com/2025/09/18/extreme-drought-grips-parts-of-maine-as-lengthy-dry-spell-persists/

According to the Cobbossee Watershed District's water levels report issued on September 12, 2025, Lake Maranacook's level is within summer standards, but is 7 inches below revised full pond elevation.

According to Fishmasters.com, there is some excellent fishing in central Maine, and Maranacook Lake has been ranked as the #16 fishing lake in Maine. You can read the article at this link: Top 30 Fishing Lakes in Maine

Also, I'd like to thank everyone who helped to make the Friends of the 4th 5K a huge success! We hope you had fun and we greatly appreciate your support! This event is extremely important, as we are able to help educate people and to fundraise. We're already looking forward to next year!

Unfortunately, the Watershed Friends found a new aquatic invasive plant species within the Cobbossee watershed https://watershedfriends.com/water-chestnut/ So far, this has not directly impacted our lake, but it is a scary reminder that we are only "one boat away" from disaster. This is why Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI's) are so vitally important. The Friends organization has provided Maranacook Lake with CBI staffing for many years. MLA pays a fee for this service, but I cannot overstate the importance that it plays in the health of our lake. This is why we need your support, financially, through volunteering, or both. Please donate as much as you can so we can keep our lake as healthy as possible!

Sincerely,

Rob Schmidt
MLA President

TOGETHER FOR CLEAN WATER: RESOURSES AND MONEY MAKE IT HAPPEN!!

WE NEED YOUR HELP

VOLUNTEER for our CBI (courtesy boat inspection) Program
BE A COMMITTEE MEMBER
VOLUNTEER at one of our fundraisers
RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS*!! More members=more resources to protect our clean lake*
MAKE A DONATION! *It is tax deductible (The MLA is a 501c3 organization)*

The mission of the Maranacook Lake Association is to protect and improve the water quality of Maranacook Lake and its watershed for the benefit of all! There are over 600 households located on and around the lake, less than 1/3 are MLA members. Community members in Readfield and Winthrop are able to enjoy their town beaches. *We need everyone's help to keep our lake clean and keep invasive species out of Maranacook!*

Loons of Maranacook: Protecting Our Lake's Iconic Voices

The haunting, beautiful call of the loon is a sound we all treasure on Maranacook Lake. But behind that call lies a delicate balance – one that depends on our continued care and awareness. At the July annual MLA meeting, Maine Audubon's Ethan Hobbs shared an in-depth update on the lake's loon population, revealing both encouraging signs and ongoing challenges.

Current Loon Count and Nesting Activity

Maranacook currently supports about six pairs of loons, which is strong for a lake of our size. However, productivity – the number of chicks successfully hatched and fledged – remains low. In most recent years, only one pair has successfully raised a chick, and this summer appears to follow that trend.

Several pairs have been active in nesting attempts, including the Norcross Point pair, which has made multiple nesting efforts but likely suffered disturbances from boat traffic and shoreline predators. The far northern pair, which successfully hatched chicks in past years, also attempted nesting again, but outcomes remain uncertain.

To help struggling pairs, two loon rafts were deployed this spring—one near Sherb's Island and another by the Train Trestle area. These floating platforms provide safer, more stable nesting locations protected from water-level fluctuations and land predators. While not every pair will immediately use a raft, these projects give loons a better chance to succeed in future seasons.

Challenges Facing Loons

Loons face increasing threats on busy lakes like Maranacook. Boat traffic, shoreline development, and limited nesting habitat all add stress. Eagles, though magnificent to watch, are natural predators that frequently attack loon chicks and even adults on nests. By contrast, osprey—which only eat fish—can actually help protect loons by deterring eagles in shared territories.

Another serious concern is lead poisoning from fishing tackle. A long-term study of over 350 loon deaths between 1987 and 2021 found that nearly one-third were caused by lead ingestion. Loons often swallow small sinkers or jigs mistaken for pebbles they use to aid digestion. Once ingested, lead is fatal.

Maranacook has experienced at least two confirmed loon deaths from lead poisoning—in 2013 and 2020. Fortunately, new state laws are tightening restrictions on lead tackle:

- Lead sinkers and bare jigs under 2.5 inches are now banned for sale and use.
- Painted lead tackle of the same size will be fully banned by 2026.

These steps are helping, but lead remains in older equipment and lake sediments. Maine Audubon's "Fish Lead Free" program offers collection buckets for safe disposal—an easy, practical way for anglers to protect our loons. Email conserve@maineaudubon.org for more information.

How You Can Help

Everyone who loves Maranacook can make a difference:

- Keep a respectful distance from loons and marked nesting areas.
- Educate visitors and boaters about slowing down near rafts or chicks.
- Switch to non-lead tackle and encourage fellow anglers to do the same.
- Volunteer with loon monitoring or raft maintenance—every helping hand counts!

Our lake's loons are more than a symbol—they are a sign of the lake's health. We can all help by keeping a respectful distance from loons, slowing down near nests, educating visitors, and volunteering for monitoring efforts. Together, we can ensure that the distinctive calls of Maranacook's loons echo across our lake for generations to come.

Maranacook Lake 2025 Season Report
Jennifer Peasnall, October 2025

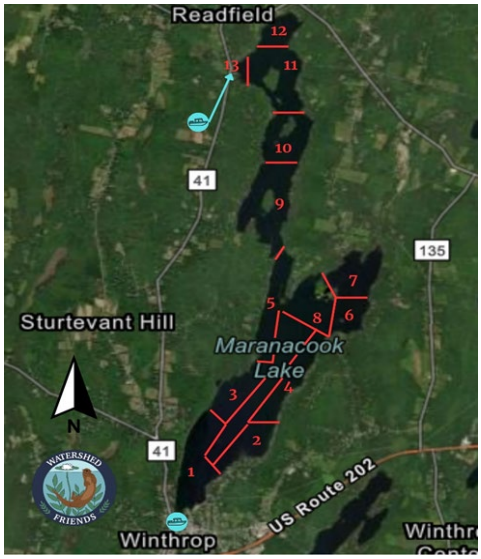
What a busy and successful season both Watershed Friends (WF) paid staff and Maranacook Lake Association (MLA) volunteers had! Watershed Friends again provided Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI) at both the Norcross (Winthrop) public boat launch and the Route 41 (Readfield) public boat launch on Maranacook Lake. This year, a new volunteer CBI program was established to enhance coverage and provide inspections during high-traffic hours on Fridays. This volunteer program was headed up by MLA Secretary, Kim Bowie, with training, support, and plant identification provided by Watershed Friends. This year, the WF survey crew completed a full Level 3 survey of Maranacook Lake, which included all the littoral zone, the area of the lake where light can penetrate to the bottom to promote plant growth. These surveys are integral in helping to detect suspicious plants early so that management can be conducted swiftly thereafter, as needed.

Maranacook Lake is considered an uninfested waterbody, meaning there is **currently no known Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) infestation** in the lake. However, due to known infestations in waterbodies nearby, Maranacook is also considered highly vulnerable. Our work is multifaceted: preventing AIS from entering Maranacook Lake and educating boaters to self-inspect and Clean, Drain, Dry their vessels, trailers, and equipment, deploying surveyors to catch AIS infestations quickly, and having the capacity for control and removal of AIS when needed.

In 2025, a total of 1,982 inspections were performed at both Maranacook public boat launches. Roughly 23% of these inspections yielded plant fragments that were removed. None of these fragments were identified to be invasive. Additionally, over 135 hours of direct survey efforts from our trained team members found no suspicious plants growing in Maranacook, indicating that Maranacook Lake is still considered to be uninfested.

The cost of these programs is not free; in 2025, the total direct cost of the CBI program on Maranacook was $13,585.98, and the full lake plant survey was $4,547.05. With rising costs due to inflation and increases in the State of Maine's minimum wage, costs are likely to increase in 2026.

Both launches are incredibly popular for recreation, and our data indicates the highest number of inspections per hour in our watershed, showcasing the importance of CBI coverage and early detection plant survey efforts on Maranacook. The costs of these preventative measures are far less than control efforts after Aquatic Invasive Species are able to establish.



To learn more about Courtesy Boat Inspection and how you may be able to volunteer to help protect Maranacook Lake,
contact our Conservation Programs Manager, Caroline Balano-Stott (caroline@watershedfriends.com).

For more information on Aquatic Invasive Species or other lake protection efforts provided by the Friends, please visit our website at watershedfriends.com or contact the Director of Conservation, Jennifer Peasnall (jennifer@watershedfriends.com).

Watershed Friends
The Shield Between Maranacook and Invasives

- Lake Associations protect their own waterbody
- Watershed Friends provides the regional expertise, staff and equipment lake associations rely on and have for over 20 years
- Maine DEP regulates and funds projects for the entire state and has worked with the Watershed Friends to become the "boots on the ground" to help Maranacook Lake and the rest of the watershed with aquatic invasive species
- Cobbossee Watershed District monitors water quality and water levels within the watershed

What happens without Watershed Friends

If Watershed Friends were to disappear tomorrow, here's Maranacook Lake's reality:

- No coordinated inspections at our boat launches
- No trained divers pulling invasives in lakes in our watershed that have them
- No watershed-wide DEP removal permit
- No experienced DEP grant pipeline or compliance reporting for Maranacook
- No rapid response personnel/contact, other than DEP, when/if invasives appear in Maranacook

If invasives aren't properly managed, they can take over a lake and cause property values to decrease (often by 10-20%), recreation suffers and long term management becomes a more costly burden for the community.

Why property owners matter

- The 2025 full lake survey completed by Watershed Friends showed no known invasives and community funding is why that survey was possible
- Continued community funding allows for paid Courtesy Boat Inspectors as well as future survey work to be completed so if an invasive is found, it is found early and can be dealt with swiftly
- Each lake in our watershed is connected and therefore our 28 lakes, 217 square miles, 15,000 visitors and 100,000 neighbors depends on the support of waterfront property owners and community members like you

The bottom line

Watershed Friends is not just another nonprofit. It is the watershed wide, shared infrastructure that keeps your shoreline safe, your property valuable and your lake usable

- 30+ Courtesy Boat inspectors stationed across the watershed
- DEP certified divers
- The only DEP permit in the watershed to coordinate and supervise the removal of invasives
- Plant ID personnel as well as workshops
- Grant writing, compliance and reporting to DEP for the whole watershed

In addition to supporting the Maranacook Lake Association, we ALL MUST support the Watershed Friends because without them..... the protection we've relied on for decades disappears with them.

https://watershedfriends.com/get-involved/donate-to-the-friends/

Protecting Maranacook Lake: The LakeSmart Program Is Here for You

Do you treasure the clear water, scenic shoreline, and abundant wildlife of Maranacook Lake? Would you like to do your part to preserve that legacy for future generations — without regulation, mandates, or costly overhauls? LakeSmart offers exactly that kind of positive, voluntary, homeowner-friendly approach to watershed stewardship.

What is LakeSmart?

LakeSmart is an education-and-outreach program run by Maine Lakes in partnership with lake associations. It recognizes and rewards lakefront property owners who manage their land in ways that protect lake water quality. The program is free, non-regulatory, and voluntary.

Here's the idea: small sources of runoff and erosion around homes, driveways, lawns, docks, and shoreline areas can cumulatively deliver phosphorus and sediment into a lake. Over time, that can contribute to excessive algae growth, reduced water clarity, or even fish and aquatic ecosystem stress. LakeSmart helps homeowners identify those less-visible problem spots and provides practical, site-specific suggestions to reduce runoff and protect water quality.

How LakeSmart Works — in Four Simple Steps

1. **Volunteer evaluator visit**

A trained volunteer (often organized through your lake association) visits the property. Over the course of less than an hour, the volunteer inspects four zones (starting from the driveway and working toward the lake) and notes areas that may be contributing erosion or runoff.

2. **On-the-spot feedback & recommendations**

During the visit, the homeowner and evaluator walk the property together. The homeowner learns right away about what is working well and what could be improved, along with web links and practical suggestions.

3. **Evaluation and possible award**

The evaluation is submitted to Maine Lakes for a final review. If the property meets all LakeSmart criteria the homeowner receives a LakeSmart Award—including two signs (one at the driveway, one at the waterfront) that publicly mark the home as a "lake-friendly" property. If only some criteria are met, the homeowner may receive a Certificate of Commendation plus targeted suggestions to reach full compliance.

4. **Implement improvements at your pace**

LakeSmart is entirely voluntary — you decide which recommendations make sense for you and when you'll act on them (or not). Many improvements are fairly low cost or even "do-it-yourself" and can be phased in over time.

Why It Matters for Maranacook Lake?

Maranacook Lake's watershed is not immune to the pressures that afflict many developed lakes:

- **Rain that falls on roofs, driveways, lawns, and bare soil can run off instead of soaking in**. That overland flow can pick up phosphorus, sediment, and other pollutants and deliver them into the lake.
- **Excess phosphorus fuels algae growth, which can reduce clarity, compromise recreation** (swimming, boating), and degrade aquatic habitat over time.

By encouraging and supporting lakefront property owners to reduce erosion, slow and infiltrate runoff, and maintain or restore vegetated buffers, LakeSmart helps reduce those nutrient inputs. Over time, this leads to:

- **Clearer, healthier water — a benefit to swimmers, anglers, paddlers, and wildlife**
- **Stable or increased property values, since lakefront lands maintain their appeal**
- **Enhanced wildlife habitat along shorelines, in buffer zones, and in the lake**
- **A visible model of stewardship** — when your neighbors see the LakeSmart signs, it encourages others to adopt lake-friendly practices too.
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In fact, research shows that LakeSmart properties can be as protective of water quality as undeveloped land.

How You Can Get Involved – Here's What You Can Do

- **Reach out to the Maranacook Lake Association** and they can connect you with an evaluator.
- **Volunteer to be a LakeSmart evaluator –** you'll complete virtual training plus an in-person session
- **Use the evaluation results to make small improvements–**it benefits your property and the lake.
- **Encourage your neighbors to participate, too**. Every property that reduces runoff helps the collective health of Maranacook Lake.

A Vision for Maranacook's Future

Imagine a lake where clarity persists, blooms are minimal, and shoreline views retain their natural character. A lake where anglers see healthy habitat, swimmers feel confident, and owners take pride in contributing to a resilient lake ecosystem. LakeSmart offers a path to that future–one property at a time.

Resources:
Lakes Environmental Association
www.lakes.me/lakesmart
https://mainelakes.org
https://mainelakes.org/resources/homeowners-guide
https://mainelakes.org/resources/landowners/lakes-like-less-lawn

WINTER SAFETY ON THE ICE

As the lake freezes and winter activities begin, we kindly ask everyone to be **exceptionally cautious and vigilant** when it comes to safety on the ice. Whether you're **ice fishing, snowmobiling, skating, or walking**, please always check ice conditions before heading out, wear proper safety gear, and avoid areas with flowing water or visible cracks.

Be **courteous and respectful** to both fellow recreationists and the wildlife that remain active through the winter months.

If you witness **dangerous or disrespectful behavior** on the ice, please record the **snowmobile or vehicle registration number** and other identifying details, and **report it promptly to the Maine Warden Service at 207-624-7076**.

Together, we can help keep Maranacook safe, peaceful, and enjoyable for everyone–through every season.

Maine Ice Fishing Guide: https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fishing-boating/fishing/ice-fishing-guide.html

Maine Snowmobile Laws: https://www.maine.gov/ifw/atv-snowmobile/snowmobile/laws-rules.html

Ice Safety: https://www.maine.gov/ifw/atv-snowmobile/safety-information.html#icethickness

Maranacook Lake Association
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URGENT
TIME SENSITIVE INFORMATION
PLEASE READ

Contact us at maranacooklakeassociation@gmail.com

Visit our website at www.maranacooklakeme.org

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Maranacook Lake Association Donation page

https://maranacooklakeme.org/how-to-help/

Lake Association Membership and Donations

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