# Merrymeeting Lake News



#### **Summer 2025**

# Where Would We Be Without the MMLA?

As the Merrymeeting Lake Association celebrates its 78th year of service to our lake it's a time to reflect on what we've accomplished. But also a time to **Imagine** what Merrymeeting Lake might have become without the efforts of the MMLA. Here's some food for thought:

 Since 1981, the MMLA has collected water quality data on Merrymeeting Lake, in conjunction with the UNH Lakes Monitoring Program. The data is recorded so we can look for changes and identify any potential threats to our water quality.
 Imagine how important this data is to our ability to act before a water quality threat becomes a crisis.



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- In 1994, the NH Fish and Game Department set out to clear the boat launch area at the dam of all the trees and both the knolls to create a large, paved parking lot with night lighting. This would have increased stormwater runoff, light pollution, and vastly increased the risk of milfoil infestation to our lake. For years, the MMLA fought NH Fish and Game in court and eventually won, preventing this destruction from happening. **Imagine** a huge, paved parking lot as the entrance to MML.
- Since 2003, the MMLA has funded and managed the Lake Host Program at the boat launch. We have had verified catches of milfoil (an invasive aquatic plant) transported on boats and trailers from other lakes and rivers. The MMLA invests thousands of dollars and coordinates both volunteers and employees to staff this vital project. We receive training, some grant money and payroll assistance from the NH Lakes Association. We need to both advocate for support of this important program, and plan for continued funding measures. Merrymeeting is one of a very few lakes in the NE region that remains free of milfoil. Imagine if our shoreline were choked with invasive weeds.
- The MMLA negotiated and funded deed restrictions that prevent South Shore Road from ever connecting to Lions Camp Pride. This action required foresight, legal assistance, and patience. Without this effort, Imagine more traffic on South Shore Road.
- The MMLA funded a right of first refusal for Lions Camp Pride. If LCP ever decides to sell the property, it must first offer it to the MMLA. We of course would see to it that this property would go into conservation. **Imagine** if that property and its vast waterfront were to be developed!

- One of our current concerns is the summer lowering of the lake level, which affects and may
  enhance weed growth along our shoreline. Year-round water level management is important for
  reducing ice damage, minimizing erosion, maintaining a healthy shorefront ecosystem, and
  recreational access. Imagine what it could be like if we do not advocate for stable management of
  the water level.
- The MMLA has deployed eight AED defibrillators around all sides of Merrymeeting Lake and is
  offering CPR classes. Imagine if this effort were to save even just one life. Imagine!
- And finally,

Let us not forget that we came narrowly close to having 150+ possible new homes littering the Birch Ridge hillside. The MMLA and many generous members and supporters worked, in conjunction with SELT, to stop that from happening. We continue to work to make sure we protect our majestic views of mountains, foliage, sunrises and sunsets. Now thousands of acres of land around the lake are permanently conserved for water quality protection, wildlife habitat and recreational public access. Can you **Imagine** the lake without its beautiful views and clean water?

There is so much more we can and should do, together as a lake community.

#### **MMLA Future And Continuing Goals**

- √ Advocate for sensible water level management
- ✓ Conserve all of the mountains around the lake
- ✓ Continue our existing water quality and community programs
- ✓ Increase road safety
- ✓ Work with the town to advance fire and police safety measures
- ✓ Protect and enhance our property values
- ✓ Advocate for our community with State and Local Government

People seem to take for granted that the Association will always be there, but for us to stay strong and effective we need to grow our membership base. Encourage your neighbors and friends to join. Of over 500 homes on the lake, a little more than 200 were MMLA members last year. For all that we have done, and all that we can do in the future, we need the support of every person on this lake.

For a moment, please reflect on our many accomplishments, and **Imagine** what more we can do. Then **Imagine** the lake without the MMLA.

#### Please pledge to:

- COME TO THIS YEAR'S MMLA ANNUAL MEETING AND LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD! BRING YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS TO THE MEETING WITH YOU!
- JOIN THE MMLA TODAY!

Your support is more than just financial. We ask for your membership and your participation, because without your interest and support, it's hard for us to move the MMLA forward for both you and the next generation!



The mission of the Merrymeeting Lake
Association (MMLA)) is to preserve and
protect the innate beauty, pristine
quality, integrity, and value of
Merrymeeting Lake and its
surrounding watershed, with the goal
of conserving this irreplaceable natural
resource for future generations.

#### **Board of Directors**

#### **Officers**

President - Laurie Smith Vice-President - Allison Bolia Secretary – Julia Gaynor Treasurer – Bruce Long

#### Directors

Lisa Alfano Nancy Bryant
Melanie Cormier John Chapin
Dan Leach Bob Pellegrini
Mark Sullivan Russ Weldon
Richard Waldbauer

## **2025 Key Events**

(details inside)

Roadside Cleanup Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup>

## **Annual Member Meeting**

Saturday, July 6<sup>th</sup> New Durham School, 9 AM

> MMLA PO Box 466 New Durham, NH 03855

You can join or renew online at mmlake.org, or by mail to the address above. See details at mmlake.org

# Message from the President

#### **Dear Members and Friends of Merrymeeting Lake,**

When we conserved the Birch Ridge Community Forest in 2019, who would have dreamed that by 2025, we'd have successfully conserved (or have under contract) all but one of the mountains surrounding the lake? As I reflect on the past six years, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the dedication, hard work, and generosity that have shaped the ongoing success of our conservation efforts on behalf of the Merrymeeting Lake community.

While we can take pride in our accomplishments, we must not rest on what we've already done. The lake deserves nothing less than our continued vigilance and tireless effort. The good news is that decades of data from our regular water testing show that our water quality remains excellent. The bad news is that there are concerning changes in the water levels, climate change, and nutrient sources which are affecting water temperature and plant growth. If left unaddressed, these changes could eventually contribute to the degradation of our water quality. This year, we'll be focusing on these threats to the health of our lake, and we need all hands-on deck, starting with increasing our membership numbers.

Despite our significant achievements, it's puzzling that we currently have membership from less than half of the households around the lake. While everyone in our community benefits from our efforts, many have not yet joined as members. If you're already a member, thank you! If you're not, I cannot emphasize enough how crucial it is to join! Your dues and optional donations directly fund our conservation work, water quality testing, the Lake Host program, and more. If the falling water levels over the past few years concern you, or if you enjoy hiking on the trails or sitting on your shoreline at night without the distraction of lights from homes and condos on the surrounding slopes, now is the time to act and support the MMLA. In a world that often feels divided, it's inspiring to be part of an organization that brings us all together for one shared purpose. Let's protect the lake together!

Our accomplishments would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of our MMLA board members, who generously donate their time and energy. I want to take a moment to recognize them for their exceptional leadership. But the true strength of our work lies in the unwavering commitment and support of our community members, who share a deep passion for the lake's health. I am profoundly grateful for your continued involvement and dedication. Together, we are forging a lasting legacy of environmental stewardship, community engagement, and a deep love for Merrymeeting Lake. It has truly been an honor to work alongside such a dedicated and inspiring community.

Thank you!

Laurie Smith President, MMLA

# 2025 MMLA Summer Schedule of Events

Engaging a fun and active lake community is among the MMLA's top initiatives, and our 2025 schedule of events includes many of our annual favorites! Don't miss out on these great opportunities to support the lake alongside your neighbors.

#### **Roadside Cleanup**

#### June 7 - 8:30 AM - meet at MMLA Meeting House

Join us at the MMLA Meeting House (by Cove Cottages) at 8:30 AM to check in and get road assignments. Enjoy the weather while making a direct impact on the lake! Rain date is June 8.

#### **MMLA Annual Meeting**

#### July 6 - 8:30 AM - New Durham Elementary School

Gather at 8:30 AM for light refreshments. Meeting starts at 9:00 AM. Come to hear all the great things happening in our Merrymeeting Lake community and the important work being done by the MMLA.

#### "All About Loons" Presentation

#### July 13 - 10:00 to 11:30 AM - MMLA Meeting House

Enjoy a fascinating talk by an expert from the NH Loon Preservation Committee. Learn about loon behavior, loon etiquette, and the births and deaths of loons on Merrymeeting Lake.



#### Music on the Lake

#### July 26 - 3:30 to 8:30 PM - multiple locations around the lake

This event features Merrymeeting's very own talented musicians who will entertain us from their docks as we listen to their tunes from our boats. Stay tuned for more details regarding times and locations through email, our website and facebook.

#### Concert on the Lake

#### August 2 – 7:00 PM – In front of the Marina

The Merrymeeting Marina is hosting a concert by The Eric Grant Band. Hop in your boat and enjoy a music-filled evening while floating in front of the marina.

## "Merrymeeting Water Quality Status and Stewardship" Presentation

#### August 3 – 10:00 to 11:30 AM – MMLA Meeting House

Join us for an informative slide show by aquatic biologist Nancy Bryant. Learn about Merrymeeting's water quality over the years, how it's measured, and how we can work together to protect our beautiful lake.

#### **Boat Parade**

#### August 9 - 1:00 PM - meet at MML dam

To inspire the boating creatives, the theme for 2025 will be "Halloween on the Lake". Gather at 1:00 PM at the dam to form a line and travel counterclockwise all the way around the lake. (Please note that the starboard side of your boat will be seen from the shoreline.)

#### Ice Cream Social

#### August 16 - 2:00 to 4:00 PM - MMLA Meeting House

Enjoy a tasty treat with your neighbors and community members! Many thanks to Johnson's Restaurant for their continued generosity in support of this event!



#### **Merrymeeting Clean Forever**

#### An ambitious new campaign to protect 60% or more of Merrymeeting Lake's watershed



2019. It is a year that would prove pivotal in the history of Merrymeeting Lake. That was when the Merrymeeting River and Lake Watershed Management Plan warned that the lake was at the threshold of significant water quality degradation from development. As one of the long-time contenders for "Cleanest Lake in New Hampshire," Merrymeeting at risk galvanized the community.

Work began in earnest, as the Merrymeeting Lake Association, the Southeast Land Trust of NH (SELT), and Moose Mountain Regional Greenways collectively raised \$2.9 million to purchase and protect the 2,000+ acre Birch Ridge Community Forest. From there, momentum for Merrymeeting took off with subsequent conservation projects including an expansion of Birch Ridge, the Collins Family Forest at Mount Molly, and, most recently, the protection of the adjoining 376-acre Mount Bet in December 2024. To date, 49% of Merrymeeting's watershed has been protected through these efforts.

With each success, more opportunities have arisen. Reacting to the enthusiasm of the Merrymeeting community - as well as the number of lands that still need protecting - our friends at SELT have connected with motivated community members with ambitious goals of conserving at least 60% of the watershed by 2027. To do so, SELT is seeking to establish a \$3 million Strategic Conservation Fund for Merrymeeting, powered by an amazing \$1.15 million matching pledge from a local family to kickstart the Merrymeeting Clean Forever campaign.

The first lodestar of the campaign is the proposed protection of the 600+acre Mount Jesse, which came under contract with SELT in 2024. This highly visible peak includes two tributaries that empty directly into the lake and feature tremendous scenic, wildlife, and outdoor recreation value. Discussions with two additional landowners are underway, only underscoring the need for a strategic fund in order to move quickly.

And this is just the beginning! If you would like to learn more about the latest news on the Merrymeeting Clean Forever campaign and how to get involved, including an opportunity to attend public campaign awareness events this summer, please visit <u>seltnh.org/merrymeeting</u> or contact Brian Hart, Executive Director of SELT at brian@seltnh.org or 603-778-6088.

### Lake Water Quality Status and Stewardship

Extreme weather events from climate change are negatively impacting New England lakes. Weather abnormalities, like shorter ice-in periods, heavier rainstorms, and hotter summers, are changing lake ecology and fish/algae/macroinvertebrate population dynamics. Torrential downpours are washing more nutrients into lakes, and the warmer water in summer along with this increase in nutrients is the perfect recipe for algal blooms. Many blue-green algae blooms were observed in NH lakes last summer, limiting recreational activities. Fortunately, we did not have a blue-green bloom on Merrymeeting Lake in 2024, but we did have two very brief blooms in 2022.



The MMLA has monitored the water quality of the lake at three deep sites since 1981, and this summer we plan to add shoreline sampling at a few volunteer locations. This water quality data helps us keep track of the overall health of the lake, although it does not catch localized conditions or more subtle changes.

Each of us can do our part to decrease nutrient input to the lake. Here are a few suggestions:

- Redirect stormwater runoff so that it doesn't flow directly into the lake.
- Plant native shrubs such as blueberries along the shoreline to help retain rainwater and prevent erosion (a vegetated shoreline has the added benefit of keeping the geese away).
- Do not use fertilizer (neither synthetic nor organic as they both have nutrients which will feed algae and aquatic plants).
- Maintain your septic system by periodically pumping out the septic tank and keeping the leach field free of tree roots.

Please join us on August 3 for a presentation about Merrymeeting's water quality status, photos of our water quality monitoring program, and more stewardship tips for protecting the lake.

## **State Assessment of Merrymeeting Dams**

On April 22, 2025, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Dam Bureau held a public information meeting about their ongoing evaluation of Merrymeeting Lake Dam, Jones Pond Dam and Alton Power Dam. These three state-owned dams are being evaluated for hazard classification, discharge capacity and structural stability. All three dams are classified as high hazard, rated to be in poor condition, and fail to meet several dam safety criteria. NHDES anticipates holding a



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public meeting later this summer to discuss design and remediation recommendations for the three dams. The MMLA will closely follow this State Assessment Project and will keep members informed of future developments. The NHDES powerpoint presentation from April 22 is currently posted on the New Durham town website at <a href="https://www.newdurhamnh.us/uploads/merrymeetingdams.pdf">https://www.newdurhamnh.us/uploads/merrymeetingdams.pdf</a>

## Lake Host swoops in to rescue Conway Lake from invasive zebra mussels!



Concord, N.H., August 21, 2024 – Thanks to the efforts of NH LAKES' Lake Hosts, many of New Hampshire's most popular lakes continue to be protected from the spread of invasive species this summer. The primary way invasive species—animals like the zebra mussel and plants like variable milfoil—spread from waterbody to waterbody is by hitching rides on boats that have not been adequately cleaned, drained, and dried between waterbodies.

In early August, a pontoon boat arrived at the Conway Lake launch from Lake Zoar in Connecticut. While inspecting the boat before its launch, the Lake Host found zebra mussels hiding in all the nooks and crannies of the pontoons. This is an extremely important save because New Hampshire has no known zebra mussel infestations.

There are over 600 Lake Hosts throughout the state who serve as our lakes' frontline of defense against the spread of aquatic

invasive plants and animals. Since the Lake Host Program began in 2002, Lake Hosts have inspected nearly 1.6 million boats and made over 1,500 saves. In addition to this save, Lake Hosts have made critical saves at Merrymeeting Lake. Learn about those saves at <a href="mailto:nhlakes.org/lake-host">nhlakes.org/lake-host</a>.

The MMLA provides the majority of the funding for the Merrymeeting Lake Host program. In 2024, 794 boats were inspected by our lake hosts; 575 boats as they arrived and 219 boats as they departed. If you are interested in volunteering or working as a lake host, please send an email to mmla@mmlake.org with the subject header "Lake Host".

### **MML Oral History Project**



Mary and Ralph Richardson's Boat Landing 1948/9.
Merrymeeting Lake Marina is located here.
Source George Taylor 1988."



Will Gould Camp – Reported to be the 1st on Merrymeeting Lake – reached it by way of Birch Hill Road, which extended to South Shore of Lake then

Photographs from the New Durham Historical Collections.

Do you remember when: South Shore was a dirt road?; driving up Owl's Head on North Shore Road was a daring feat?; you could row a boat around the island?; most homes on the lake were seasonal camps?; the Snack Bar served up awesome ice cream sundaes? This year the MMLA is embarking on a project with New Durham Town Historian Cathy Orlowicz to collect oral histories of the lake, starting with people who have been here the longest. If you are interested in contributing your memories and/or helping with interviews, please send an email to <a href="mailto:mmla@mmlake.org">mmla@mmlake.org</a> or to <a href="mailto:bryantnab@yahoo.com">bryantnab@yahoo.com</a> with the subject header "MML History".

# Please support your local businesses

- they support us!

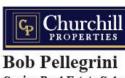














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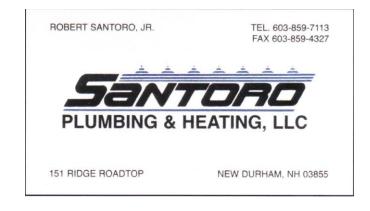




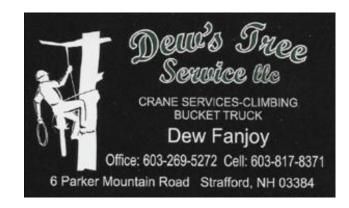
















## **Interview with State Representative DeRoy**

In November 2024, Susan DeRoy was elected to the NH Legislature as a representative for New Durham and Middleton. Susan lives on the lake and joined us for the following interview.

#### How long have you been coming to Merrymeeting?

I've been coming to the lake since I was five years old. My best friend's family had a camp on Merrymeeting Road, and I was trucked up to keep her company during the summer. The family still owns the camp. Oh, how it brings back countless memories of all of us growing up there. We're best friends, like sisters, and the whole family remains close.



When I first used to come to the lake, the marina had a store and snack bar where the Ski Monkey community center is now. We all loved getting french fries there along with ice cream. There was a real sense of community. Everyone knew each other.

#### When did you move here full-time?

We've been living here full-time since 1998, although we do keep our house in Maine where we raised our children because we wanted them to keep coming home. The funny thing is, they do come home, but they always come home to the lake. Once in a while, they stay there for a few days to visit places in Maine.

When my husband and I got married, our dream was to have a place on the lake. It took many years, but in 1998, there were a few houses for sale. When we walked into this home on Pine Point with the sandy beach, we both turned and looked at each other and said "This is the place." Absolutely perfect for grandchildren!

#### What's your favorite thing to do during a weekend at the lake?

I love sitting on the deck, watching everyone go by in their boats or skiing. Our cove is pretty calm, so we don't get a lot of wind. I love rides in the boat when my husband Joe drives, and I take a nap. It's so peaceful. I love spending time with our five grandchildren, walking our cocker spaniels, or having mimosas in the morning with my girlfriend who lives next door, and working on our garden.

This is such a special place for me. I took care of my parents when they were sick, and then my sister and they each passed away here at the lake. I have so many memories here, from almost my entire life.

#### What do you think makes MML so special?

The people, the memories many of us have, and how fortunate we all are here to have such a wonderful place to be. Some of the people have been here for generations. With time passing, unfortunately, we've lost a lot of them.

The other thing that makes it so special is how peaceful it is, and of course, the quality of the water. The Merrymeeting Lake Association was and still is such an incredible steward of the lake. They take such pride in keeping the lake pristine and put a lot of effort into that with the water testing program and by having the lake hosts.

We're extremely fortunate that we haven't gotten any of those terrible invasive species and cyanobacteria. That's something they talk a lot about at the State House because it's a problem across New Hampshire lakes.

#### What do you think about the future of Merrymeeting Lake?

Of course, things change, and it can be hard for long-time lake residents to adapt to the loss of families who've been here for decades, but the one thing that everyone seems to agree on is that we have a beautiful asset and we need to make sure we preserve it.

You can contact Representative DeRoy through email at <a href="mailto:sgderoy@gmail.com">sgderoy@gmail.com</a> or <a href="mailto:Susan.DeRoy@gc.nh.gov">Susan.DeRoy@gc.nh.gov</a>

# **Obituaries**

#### Ann Lucia Hewitt Mottl

July 19, 1939 - May 15, 2024



Ann was a committed and loving mother to her three children, Julie, Joe, and Amy while also helping to found and then spearheading the ESL program in Reading Massachusetts. She taught children from more than 40 countries over the course of what became a new 25-year career. Ann's creativity led her to write numerous short stories and poems, culminating in her novel, 'By Hook or By Stars'. She championed causes focused on the environment, immigration access and rights, and animal welfare. Ann loved traveling with Tom, her husband of 62 years, visiting with family in the U.S. and abroad, and spending time at their home on Merrymeeting Lake. For more information, please visit <a href="https://thereadingpost.com/2024/05/31/obituary-ann-lucia-hewitt-mottl/">https://thereadingpost.com/2024/05/31/obituary-ann-lucia-hewitt-mottl/</a>

# Sandra Foss Thompson Grigg

August 17 1943 - August 30, 2024

Sandra Foss Thompson Grigg, born in Boston, MA on August 17, 1943 died at her home in New Durham, NH on August 30, 2024, after a lengthy illness.



She lived her life to the fullest as a devoted wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Sandra was a very active member in New Durham, serving as the town Welfare Officer for many years, volunteering her time with school events, and the New Durham Fire Department. She worked many years as an independent Title Abstractor, and alongside her husband of 59 years, James (Bill) Grigg, with his Real Estate business. For more information, please visit <a href="https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/legacyremembers/sandra-grigg-obituary?id=56216812">https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/legacyremembers/sandra-grigg-obituary?id=56216812</a>

# Merrymeeting Marina at Your Service (603-859-2000)



The entire staff is excited for the 2025 season to begin at Merrymeeting Marina! We thank everyone for the constant dedication and support, as we couldn't do it without you, our valued customers! Please let us know what we can do to service your needs this summer.

By popular demand the Marina is bringing back The Eric Grant Band Saturday evening, August 2, for another Merrymeeting boat in Concert. They rocked it last year, and they have promised a bigger and better show this year!"

# Marina Services & Supplies

- Gas & oil
- Boating accessories
- Boat/jet ski repairs and maintenance (provided onsite by two dedicated mechanics)
- Moorings
- Winter storage (indoor and outdoor)
- Shrink wrapping

## Treats, Sweets, and More

- Ice cream and novelty ice cream
- Assorted candies
- Water and soda
- Lake apparel, including hats, shirts, and sweatshirts

# Secure Mooring = Secure Boat

As a result of severe storms we are often called to rescue boats when mooring chains break under stress. The lucky boats are those that break free but are rescued without damage. Please let us know if you would like a diver to check your mooring. It is far less expensive to have a diver replace the chain than to find your boat at the bottom of the lake or beached somewhere.

Have a Safe and Fun Summer!

#### **Hours of Operation**

Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day

Friday – Sunday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

#### **Other Weekdays All Summer**

Monday – Thursday
Gas and ice cream available
(just ask an employee for assistance)

Sunday, October 12th
Last call for boats

Sunday, October 26th
Boating season ends
Snowmobile repair begins

## Gas Available Daily

Gas is available seven days a week, 9 a.m.- 6 p.m. Please look for an attendant or call the Marina at 603-859-2000.