



# A Town of Rural Character Confronts the Specter of Suburban Sprawl

Dear Readers and Fellow Lake Dwellers,

The death of a town of rural character begins with another one-acre subdivision. A builder sees quick money in a flimsy one-bedroom colonial with an unusable, decorative front porch, reams of sheetrock and a conspicuous fake fanlight window. He creates a cheap, graceless construction devoid of charm. Two or three children, two or three more cars. Roads are widened as an antidote for congestion; yet inevitably the wider roads clog again.

Police are needed; fire department becomes woefully inadequate, taxes rise. School taxes rise every year, but townspeople are asked to dig deeper one year at a time. Nobody dares to speak of ten years of 10% per year increases, which might cause the townspeople to openly revolt and look for better solutions.

Gruesome, tragically impersonal suburban boulevards of commerce sprout up with blooms of stupefying ugly big-box stores. In front of the nowhere mall, trees and green pastures are replaced by fields of asphalt automobile storage. Does the man who designed Cross River mall have to look at it or live with it as part of his everyday life? Couldn't we have insisted on buildings and spaces that enhanced, embellished and honored our town and its communal experience?



There is no sense of coherence to shopping on Routes 22 and 117...no trees, no benches, no contiguous sidewalks. One must use the car to get safely to the next store one half-block away.

Maybe you think people who want to preserve the town are sentimentalists, nostalgic for a lost Eden. But development is no small fracture in the bulwark of your township. It can quickly snowball into an onslaught of soulless, aesthetically demoralizing suburban development.

Is there no way to protect undeveloped land or limit growth? Does each landowner and developer have his right to profit at the cost of many? Would anything else be un-American? If you think this is a seemingly inevitable onslaught, and that our town is destined to be smeared with ugliness, see what people who are working to protect our town and lakes are doing in the following articles.

— James Blechman

# Preserving Our Open Spaces: What You Can Do

## A SURVEY OF LAND-USE STUDIES IN OUR TOWN

As sprawling homes eat up Lewisboro's remaining meadows and wetlands and school taxes go up another ten percent for yet another year, we all wonder if there is anything any of us can do to save our town.

In fact, there are numerous environmental studies taking place in Lewisboro right now that could use our participation. Our input in these studies is crucial, not just to help in the collection of data, but also to implement the policy changes that grow out of them.

The first study, done last fall, was the town-wide survey sponsored by the Conservation Advisory Council. Results showed overwhelming support for the preservation of open space. The majority of respondents recommended that the Town buy open space with town funds and funds from a one per cent transfer tax on home purchases. Copies are available at the town library.

A second study, being done by economist Kent Gardner, will look at the cost/benefit of buying open space. Most studies of other towns have shown that it's cheaper to taxpayers in the long run to buy up open space rather than let it be turned into homes with more schoolchildren. Results of the study will be available at the Town Supervisor's office next month.

A third study was released this week. The Board of Education did a demographic study of the student age population. Unfortunately, it showed enrollment continuing to mushroom. While a portion of this growth is the inevitable result of people having



more children per household than in the past, a large part of the explosion is due to new home construction. Some of this is within our control. We can lower the density of subdivisions by changing zoning rules, and we can permanently set aside open space.

Two other studies are taking place now which need your active participation. In the first study, the Conservation Advisory Council is creating an Open Space Index/Inventory. Citizens are needed to work in the field making observations at several sites that the CAC has identified as worthy of preservation. Volunteers have walked the length of the Waccabuc River, and will be looking next at sites in Waccabuc. The results of this project will form the basis of the Town's Open Space Plan. To participate, call Doug Moore at 763-5562, or Pat Daigle, CAC Chairperson, at 763-3304.

The second study is the Eastern Westchester Biotic Corridor Study. Michael Klemens of the Wildlife Conservation Society and town volunteers are cataloguing five areas in town that support sensitive amphibians and reptiles. The study began with a walk in the Brownell Preserve last month. The Westchester Land Trust with Pace University Law School will complete the study by recommending ways to preserve these areas. To participate, call Deborah Sourby at 232-9537 or Christie McDonald at 925-9175.

Throughout the year, the Lewisboro Land Trust has been fulfilling its mission to preserve open space. The Trust recently received title to over ninety contiguous acres in Waccabuc, all open to the public. The Trust is providing technical support to the town on the Belle and Houlihan properties to make sure they are developed in a sensitive way, or, even

better, purchased outright by the town. For information, call Susan Henry at 763-5767.

All these studies and surveys will influence the Master Plan update. The Master Plan is the policy statement that guides the town's future development. The Planning Board has had over twenty meetings on proposed changes to the Plan, and will certainly give these studies great weight. Your suggestions regarding the Master Plan update are welcomed by the Planning Board. Call the Planning Department, 763-5592. Copies of the current Master Plan can be obtained from the Town Clerk, 763-3511.

As you can see, many people are gathering lots of information. Studying problems is the easy part. At some point we have to put the papers away and make changes. We will soon have enough information from these studies to make intelligent decisions about our town's future. We have a survey that says townspeople want to preserve open space. A previous study showed that Lewisboro has preserved only twenty-five per cent of its open space, less than our four neighboring towns have. It's expected that the fiscal study will show that it makes sense economically to preserve open space. Soon we'll have several reports that

will recommend which places should be saved, another study will show how we can save them. We will then be able to come up with an open space plan for Lewisboro that will satisfy the desire of our citizens to preserve open space, maintain biodiversity, retain the rural character of Lewisboro, raise property values, and keep taxes from going up as much as they would have. At that point, hopefully before the end of this year, we need to contribute our input to ensure that our elected officials respond with a plan to keep Lewisboro the special place it's always been.

— Jim Nordgren

# Protecting Our Watershed

**INVOLVES EVERYONE AROUND THE THREE LAKES**

Two major initiatives are underway to protect and to enhance the quality of the water in the reservoirs in northern Westchester. Both are important to residents around the Three Lakes because we are part of this vital watershed. The water that passes through our lakes and leaves Lake Waccabuc via the Waccabuc River, very quickly enters the Cross River Reservoir after passing through Ward Pound Ridge Reservation. The Cross River Reservoir is one of the seven reservoirs in northern Westchester managed by New York City as part of its public drinking water supply. The others are the Amawalk, Croton Falls, East Branch, Muscoot, New Croton and Titicus Reservoirs.

The drainage basins for these seven reservoirs encompass all or

parts of ten municipalities in Westchester County— a total of 177 square miles (39% of Westchester County's total area). This system (with additional reservoirs in Putnam County) provides 10% of New York City's drinking water supply.

The Town of Lewisboro, along with the other watershed towns and The County of Westchester, is party to the recent NYC Watershed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). This historic Agreement allows the City to impose new watershed protection regulations on this area. In return, New York City is to provide funding to the watershed towns and Westchester County to conduct two important studies.

## SEWAGE DIVERSION

The first study, the Westchester Wastewater Diversion Study, was

completed earlier this year. This report examines the impact of closing every sewage treatment plant in the Croton Watershed and diverting the sewage to other treatment plants located outside the watershed, such as those in Peekskill and Yonkers. The purpose was to identify if it is cost effective to divert the effluent from the reservoirs. The finding: the price tag is enormous. Meanwhile, the City of New York has yet to complete another study to show how much it would cost to upgrade the plants to state of the art standards instead. Once that study is completed, the two sets of results will be compared and decisions on the most effective approach made. It is unlikely that any Lewisboro's plants (such as those at the Meadows condominiums and at the

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### THREE LAKES NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

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schools) will be diverted. The cost is just too high.

The first study also identified neighborhoods where installation of sewers should be considered so as to best protect water quality. The Cove Road, Twin Lakes Village, Knapp Road and South Lake Shore neighborhoods were studied and the cost

Westchester County and New York City's Department of Environmental Protection (NYC DEP) to prevent degradation of the water quality, in the Croton watershed.

Recommend measures to be taken to protect the character and special needs of communities located within the watershed.

plan, in continuing education efforts and in implementation of plan recommendations. The importance of water quality maintenance must be understood and shared by those who live in the watershed. Equally important, the identification and protection of community character requires direction from community residents.

The actual work tasks (over 40 have been outlined) of the Croton planning process will be performed by County, City and municipal staff, some consultants and Municipal Action Teams (MATs). Each town has organized a MAT to coordinate planning locally. In Lewisboro, members from the Planning Board, Town Board and Conservation Advisory Council participate on the MAT. The Three Lakes Council has been asked by the County to sit on a broader watershed-wide advisory committee.

The work tasks fall into three subject areas:

- Land Management
- Water Management
- Information and Education

The tasks cover an amazingly wide scope. For example, some of the tasks will set up septic pump-out programs; define better stormwater management techniques to avoid direct runoff into lakes and streams; educate homeowners about the dangers in using some lawn chemicals; recommend zoning regulation changes; recommend changes to wetland disturbance regulations; and find ways to allow existing commercial areas to continue operating without hurting water quality.

The Croton Planning initiative is a practical approach to protecting an inhabited watershed. We are here, so what can we do to minimize the deleterious impact of our presence. To meet that challenge will require the help and support of every resident around the Three Lakes.

—Ed Burrows



of installing sewers identified. Again, the cost is enormous. The collected sewage would have to be piped all the way to Mount Kisco where it would enter an existing large trunk line to Yonkers.

### CROTON PLANNING

The more exciting, and practical, project just got underway this year. It's called "Croton Planning." This is a three-year process with the following main objectives:

- Identify significant sources of pollution to the Croton watershed system;
- Recommend measures that can be taken by the northern Westchester watershed municipalities, Westch-

Because watersheds have almost no relation to town borders, Croton Planning is a regional program with all ten towns working together with central staff assistance provided by the Westchester County Department of Planning. The project is being run by a Steering Committee consisting of the ten town supervisors and County officials. The town supervisors are responsible for insuring the participation of municipal boards and staff.

A vital component of Croton Planning is the participation of resident and neighborhood groups. Watershed planning cannot be effective without the involvement of watershed residents in the development of the

# What You Should Know About Where Your Tax Dollars Go

Last winter, one of the mildest on record, the Town of Lewisboro's Highway Department emptied nine full dump trucks of salt on the roads surrounding Lakes Waccabuc, Oscaleta and Rippowam. More than 90 tons of this environmentally unfriendly agent descended on our delicate ecosystem...almost twice that spread in years passed... all to combat about eight inches of snow.

## SALT VS. CMA

Why do we continue to use such excessive amounts of road salt in a lake community? In addition to corroding our cars, the chlorides in road salt pollute our lakes, kill our trees, and contaminate the water table. (The Highway Department has already had to finance the digging of several new wells along Lake Truesdale as a result of road salt contamination). University of Wisconsin-Madison researchers reported recently that chloride levels in lakes near a major highway were seven times higher than those found in lakes removed from the highway. This concentration of chloride allows toxic heavy metals in the soil to become soluble, allowing them to poison living things.

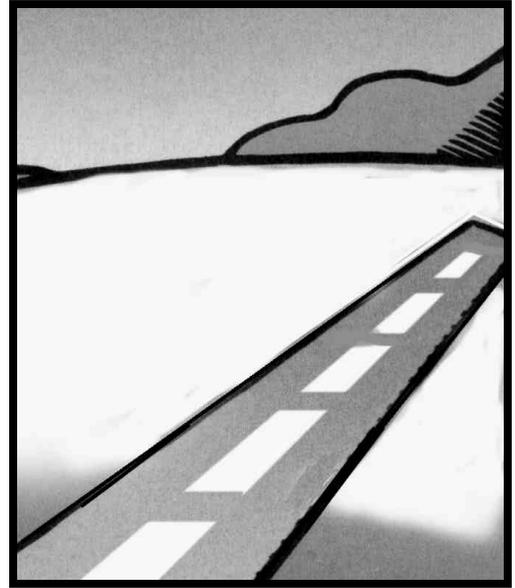
Many lament the heavy use of road salt as a necessary evil. It is not. First, the quantities we're applying are absurd. Second, there are time-tested, environmentally safe alternatives – alternatives that have been used with great success in towns near ours. For example, Yorktown Heights has enjoyed good results with a product called "Ice Ban," a liquid pretreatment containing **CMA, calcium magnesium acetate**. Totally biodegradable, it is an *anti-icing* measure – specifically a chemical freezing point depressant – applied to roads *before* a snowfall to prevent a bond forming

between the snow and the pavement surface. Salt, by contrast, is a *de-icing* measure applied to roads *after* a snowfall as a reactive measure.

The advantages to CMA are numerous. First, it's more environmentally friendly. Microorganisms in the soil and water consume the acetate, and the calcium and magnesium return to earth, ultimately forming limestone or other mineral deposits. Introduced in 1970s by Chevron, the effects of CMA have been tested for a while now on various forms of terrestrial and aquatic life with no ill effects reported, even at concentrations far higher than that used on roads.

Yes, CMA is more expensive. Estimates range from \$300 to \$600 a ton, as opposed to roughly \$35 per ton for salt. And depending on the form you use – solid or liquid – we may have to incur a one-time retrofitting charge of roughly \$2,000 per truck, but long-term – both in terms of lake health *and* economics – the costs of gradually replacing salt with CMA are well-justified. The indirect costs of salt corrosion and pollution are substantial. One 1991 federal study pegged the damage done by road salt corrosion at \$3.5 to \$7 billion per year. Furthermore, salt causes the rebar in cement structures (bridges, etc.) to expand considerably over time, breaking the cement apart from within. CMA on the other hand is no more corrosive or damaging to concrete than tap water. Finally, salt attracts deer to our roads. Using an alternative to salt will help minimize deer-related accidents saving money and, potentially, lives.

In the interests of full and fair disclosure, I should reveal at this point



that – as well as being a Cove Road neighbor – I am also a candidate for Highway Superintendent in the coming election. And I'd like to give some form of CMA a try, certainly around the seven freshwater lakes in the Town of Lewisboro. Eric DeBartolo, the superintendent of highways in Yorktown Heights, has indicated in conversations with me that he is using far less than the suggested amount of "Ice Ban" per road mile – about a fourth – with great success. We can start by mixing CMA with the road salt, thus drastically reducing (by up to 70%) the amount of salt we are dumping. And you use far less CMA, as a rule, than road salt, so this might be more economical than we think. I think it's worth devoting three of our fifteen trucks to this alternative on a trial basis.

## CATCH BASIN CLEAN-UP

Another issue of environmental relevance to the Three Lakes is the cleaning of the 82 storm drains situated around the full periphery of Lakes Waccabuc, Oscaleta and Rippowam. Some empty directly into

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the lakes; all divert surface water toward the wetlands adjacent to the lakes. This runoff acts as a potent source of non-point pollution, concentrating animal waste, car effluents and winter salt and then sending them into our lakes. To minimize the threat posed by these storm drains — which help us maintain the quality of our roads and prevent erosion — we should start by implementing a regular catch basin cleaning program. The catch basin is a three-foot box through which the storm drains filters silt. (Technically, in a lake community, they should be four feet).

Right now, we have to lease a special vacuum truck down in New York City every time we want to clean our

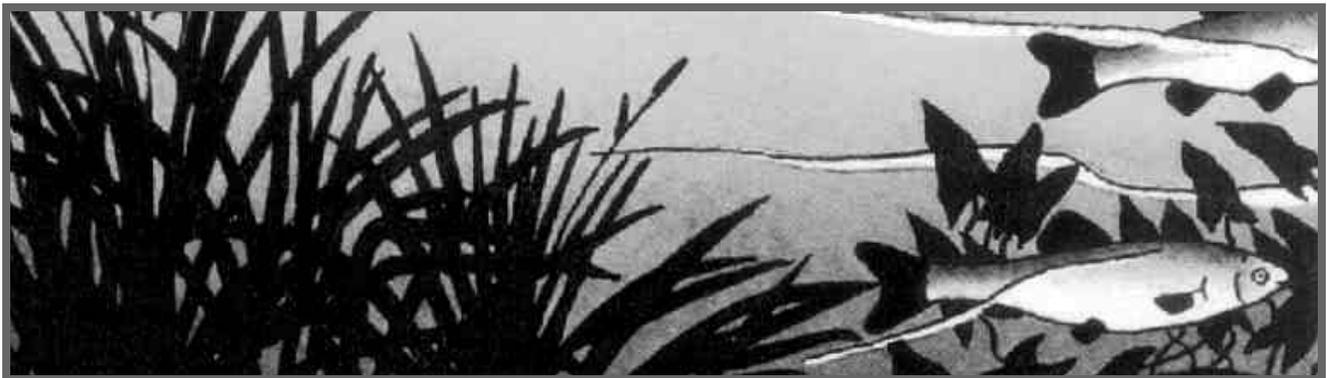
the catch basins. With more than 700 catch basins in town, we're leasing that truck for two months at a time, and we have no regular schedule. I'd like to either purchase a catch basin cleaner or retrofit one of our existing dump trucks. Yes, there will be a one-time expense involved, but the savings over the long run will be significant. Furthermore, Westchester County may be willing to provide a grant in the interests of improving the water quality of the reservoirs. Lastly, I'd like to direct the drainage leaving the catch basins, wherever feasible, to points *above-ground* into rocks and gravel that can filter the runoff. Right now, much of the drainage empties directly into our lakes and streams.

#### LEAF PICKUP

Finally, I'd like to reinstitute leaf pickup once a year, particularly in areas around town with quarter- or half-acre zoning, which includes the Three Lakes. These properties have nowhere to compost these leaves and nowhere nearby to dump them. It's a major headache, and the consequences of leaves sitting on lawns year-round are harmful to the lakes.

As a closing note, let me encourage you to approach me with ideas you may have for how the Town Highway Department can better serve your needs. I live at 57 Cove Road and can be reached at 763-6051 or by e-mail at [townroads@juno.com](mailto:townroads@juno.com)

— Richard Smith



### ZEBRA MUSSELS THREATEN OUR LAKES

*Primary prevention is the only answer!*

The “zebra mussel” is an invader to North American fresh surface waters that has the capacity to disrupt food webs and ecosystem balances, interfere with sport fishing, navigation, recreational boating, beach use, and filtration devices.

Zebra mussels were first discovered in the Great Lakes Basin in 1988. The zebra mussel is the only bivalve fresh water mollusk that can attach itself to any hard surface, i.e. docks, boats, motors, intake valves, etc. When zebra mussels are introduced into a body of water they multiply at such a staggering rate (10–20 thousand per square inch is the norm) that a “feeding frenzy” is created, in which the

zebra mussel attacks and destroys the bottom of the food chain and sets up a chain reaction which will eventually effect all aquatic life. The zebra mussel shell is so sharp that shoes would be needed to walk on all beaches. The obnoxious smells from the decomposition of mussels also would detract from the enjoyment of shoreline recreational activities.

In short, we must prevent the zebra mussel from entering our lakes!

Recommendations:

- Do not transport your boats or motors from one body of water to another. If a friend's boat is transported to one of these lakes, **to destroy zebra mussel larvae** the boat must be steam-cleaned or allowed to dry in the sun 1/2



weeks before launching. Do not transport motors.

Remember, zebra mussel larvae are resilient and undetectable to the human eye. The Three Lakes Council strongly urges you to protect our lakes by informing all who may be transporting a boat into our lakes

# Don't Feed the Geese!

## HOW TO REALLY HELP OUR FEATHERY FRIENDS

**F**eeding geese is damaging to the lake, to the geese and to you. The year-round presence of the geese here harms the lakes in several ways. As suburban lakes with development along their shores, Osaleta, Rippowam and Waccabuc already are susceptible to high levels of chloroform bacteria. As you know, the Three Lakes Council regularly monitors levels of this bacteria in the spring and summer to ensure that the levels remain safe. Encouraging geese to remain by feeding them builds up slushy effluents that will elevate the bacteria levels.

The geese also undermine our efforts to maintain oxygen levels in the lakes, which already are low. Animal waste absorbs oxygen when it decomposes, which can kill fish and other organisms that live in the lakes. The Council operates two aerators in Lake Waccabuc, into which lakes Rippowam and Osaleta flow, to try to elevate the oxygen levels there.

Animal effluents nourish the growth of weeds in the lake. Eutrophication already is a serious problem at the west end of Lake Osaleta, where it flows into Lake Waccabuc, and in Lake Waccabuc.

The geese' occupation of our lakes also hinders our efforts to keep out the Zebra Mussel, which already infects other lakes in the region, including Candlewood Lake in Connecticut. Geese are known to carry larvae of the mussel as they travel among lakes.

The prolonged stay of the geese is also harmful to the geese themselves. Because the geese are roosting on ice, there is no opportunity for their waste to soak into the earth or be washed away by water. As a result, the geese by now have spent three months sitting in puddles of their own waste, threatening them with the spread of infection, disease and parasites. Those dangers also threaten a flock of ducks that also is attracted to your waterfront.

A wintertime population of geese also exposes the birds to attack from other animals, such as the neighborhood's cats and dogs, which have easy access to the birds

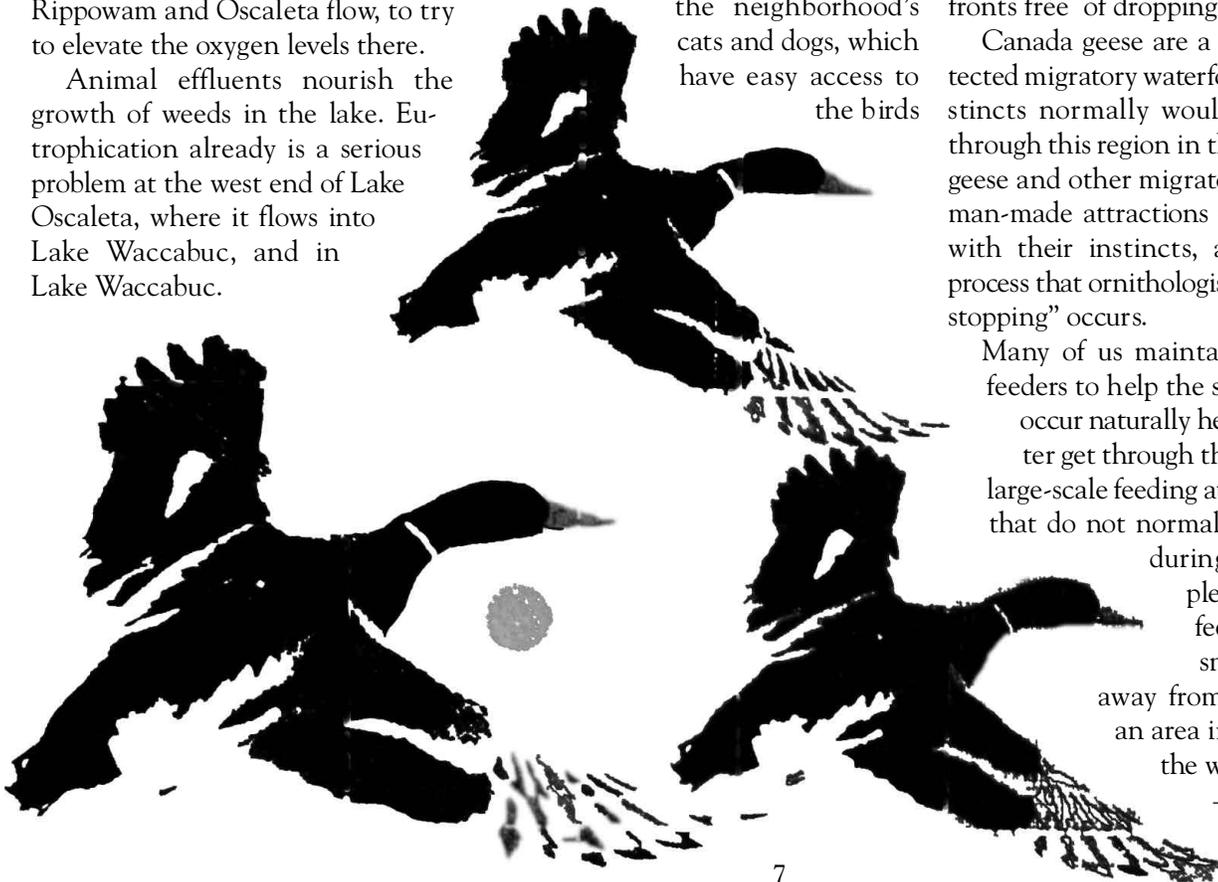
across the ice. Feeding geese also may attract other wild animals to the site. Like the geese, the chipmunks, squirrels, raccoons and skunks are a part of the ecology here. We all enjoy them. But the ecology is disturbed when they are attracted in large numbers to a single small site. This has become a particular concern, since rabies has returned to the region.

Geese on the lakes also limit the recreational use of the lakes, which are popular among swimmers, boaters and fishermen in warm weather, and hikers, skaters, skiers and ice fishermen in the winter. In the cold months, the geese at night seek refuge further out in the lake, where they also leave wide patches of excrement and feathers. After a full winter of residence by the geese, large sections of the lakes must be skirted. The geese also hinder the efforts of other property owners to keep their waterfronts free of droppings.

Canada geese are a federally protected migratory waterfowl, whose instincts normally would push them through this region in the fall. When geese and other migrators encounter man-made attractions that interfere with their instincts, an unnatural process that ornithologists call "short-stopping" occurs.

Many of us maintain small bird feeders to help the songbirds that occur naturally here in the winter get through the season. But large-scale feeding attracts species that do not normally occur here during winter. So please limit your feeding to a few small feeders away from the lake, in an area inaccessible to the waterfowl.

—Keith Eddings



# Battling the Woolly Adelgid

## KEEPING OUR HEMLOCKS ALIVE

**T**wenty-three homeowners in the Three Lakes launched a collective effort in May to save their hemlocks from an infestation of parasites that has killed scores of trees since it arrived here on the winds of Hurricane Gloria about 10 years ago.

The homeowners organized a consortium and negotiated as a group to have their trees treated for the *wooly*

bid submitted to the hemlock consortium by Westchester Tree Life was \$190 a treatment. Two treatments are required annually. In the end, the expense will be cheaper than removing the trees once they are dead.

We hope to cut the cost even further by enrolling a sufficient number of homeowners in the consortium to turn the project over to the Three Lakes

nothing—will do far more damage to the lakes by robbing them of the natural filter that the hemlocks provide. Hemlocks are a weapon for conserving the lakes because they slow erosion and absorb runoff, providing a natural buffer between the lakes and the nutrients that drain from our septic systems, lawns and driveways.

We may not have to spray indefi-



*adelgid* bug. The job went to Westchester Tree Life, a Chappaqua arborist that visited all the properties and submitted bids for the work in less than a week, with good prices.

If you have hemlocks and haven't been treating them, then the parasite—*woolly adelgid*—almost certainly is devouring your trees. See for yourself: turn over the needles on a branch and look for tiny white cottony clusters, which is the cocoon that the bug forms around itself. If you find the bug, you're just a few years or less from losing all your hemlocks. Treating your trees is also a neighborly thing to do, since the bugs in your trees will reinfest your neighbor's trees if your neighbor is spraying.

Treatments are highly effective and suddenly cheaper than ever (thanks to the consortium!). The cost varies depending on the size and numbers of your hemlocks. The mean

Council, which would make the treatments a tax deduction to you (see p. 5).

Most trees can be treated by spraying a non-toxic horticultural oil that smothers the adelgid as well as the scale (the brown spots on the needles' underside), but is otherwise benign. Trees that are taller or too close to the lake are injected with an insecticide that attacks only the adelgid and scale. The treatments can be done only by licensed arborists.

Several neighbors asked about the safety of the treatments in a waterfront neighborhood such as ours. Jeff Gourion, a rep from Westchester Tree Life who spent about an hour with me on my property, was knowledgeable about the best ways to treat the bug within our sensitive environment. The spray and injections are the only approved treatments for the woolly adelgid, which is an exotic species from Japan. The alternative—doing

nothing. A ladybug that has kept the adelgid in check in Japan has been established at several sites in Connecticut by Dr. Mark McClure, chief scientist at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. McClure has told me that the ladybug could easily spread here, although it will take a few years. We hope to persuade the New York Department of Agriculture to arrange to have the ladybug released here. In the meantime, working as a neighborhood to save our hemlocks will keep them standing until the ladybug arrives.

If you're not sure about the damage that the adelgid is doing, or if you're not sure that treatments are effective, break off a twig on one of your trees and compare it to the trees growing along my driveway. Then knock on my door or give me a call (763-6450). I live at 60 Twin Lakes Road. Thanks!

—Keith Eddings

# Fish Report

## TROUT STOCKING PROGRAM/FISHING NEWS

**W**ith the summer fishing season upon us, fishermen will receive a helping hand from the Three Lakes Council via a fish stocking this spring. The Council is supporting the stocking of one thousand 11-inch brown trout at a cost of about \$2400 dollars. This will be financed with monies from the fish-stocking fund. The trout are being purchased from the Beaverkill Trout Hatchery, thanks to Ron Tetelman. Eight hundred are to be placed in Lake Waccabuc and two hundred in Lake Osaleta.

Our stocking from 5 years ago has been almost depleted from harvesting and normal life spans, which under normal conditions is about 3–4 years for brown trout. There is little natural reproduction of trout in our lakes and therefore this stocking is not meant to replenish an existing resource but more as “put and take” effort.

The fish we are currently stocking are 18-month-old fish and can be expected to reach a length of 16 to 18 inches next year and 20 to 22 inches the following

weight in excess of 10 pounds in their 4th or 5th year as evidenced by the 9lb 15oz. trout taken by Zeke Hunter in 1997 in Lake Waccabuc. This assumes, of course, they elude the hook of the fishermen and, if caught, they are carefully released. When hooked on light to medium tackle, they are exciting to catch, as they are tenacious fighters, making a series of strong runs and, on occasion, taking to the air with breathtaking jumps. This resource, if well managed, will reward the anglers, young and old, with wonderful memories.

“Well-managed” means more than just replenishing the supply, it also strikes at the heart of sportsmanship. It means we must practice catch and release! Releasing as many or more fish than we keep is one of the tools we should adopt in order to “manage well” our resource. The following guidelines should be followed if you intend to release your catch:

### **Bait fishing**

- When the fish is brought to the side of the boat or into a net and the hook is *not* visible cut the line close to

mouth and immediately release the fish.

- Do *not* hold the fish up by the line as this will likely result in internal injuries and possible death.

- The hook is visible, remove it and return the fish to the water.

### **Lure fishing**

- Remove the lure as carefully as possible and release the fish.

- When using soft baits, rubber worms, and the fish is hooked, deep cut the line close to the mouth and release to fish.

The above methods of release should be used for all species in our lakes. If you would like further clarification about how to release fish, speak with Zeke at his sport shop at 763-9255 or the NYS Fisheries Dept at 914-256-3161.

Last spring we also stocked 2-year-old 8–9” small mouth bass in Lakes Osaleta and Rippowam. I was recently fishing Lake Osaleta this spring and caught 4 small mouths. The largest was 13 inches which constitutes a significant growth from last year. Small mouth bass live 8–10 years under normal conditions and reach a weight of 5–5.5 lbs. A 4yr old fish will be about 11–14 inches while an 8–10yr old fish will reach 10–20 inches. Small mouth bass are great fighters and readily take to the air when hooked. The large mouth bass, perch, and pan fish stocks are very healthy and pickerel continue to increase in numbers thanks, in part, to those who continue to release them.

It is the responsibility of everyone to question any boat operator whose boat does not display a “Three Lakes” sticker. It behooves us fishermen to be a little extra diligent to protect the resource we hold dear to our hearts. Watchful eyes keep interlopers at bay.

— Joe Tansey



# News & Notes

## SEPTIC TANK CLEANING

Once again, the Three Lakes Council is organizing a group discount for septic tank cleaning. These tanks should be pumped yearly if you live on the lake and bi-yearly if you do not. If solids, sludge and scum reach a high level, they will wash into and clog the drain field surrounding the tank, jeopardizing the health of the lake and, quite possibly, your well. Please contact Mimi Shane at 763-6564 if you are interested in participating.

## NEW LAKE INVASIVES

Two highly aggressive non-native plants recently gained a foothold in the Three Lakes and will crowd out native plants and destroy wildlife habitat unless they're contained. The two plants—purple loosestrife and phragmites (also called common reed)—are on the Nature Conservancy's list of the "dirty dozen" exotic species. Both can swallow a wetlands whole.

Purple loosestrife is a brilliant flowering stalk that grows to about six feet. It was brought into New England from Europe more than 100 years ago. Since then, the "purple plague" has been smothering out native plants in a sea of purple.

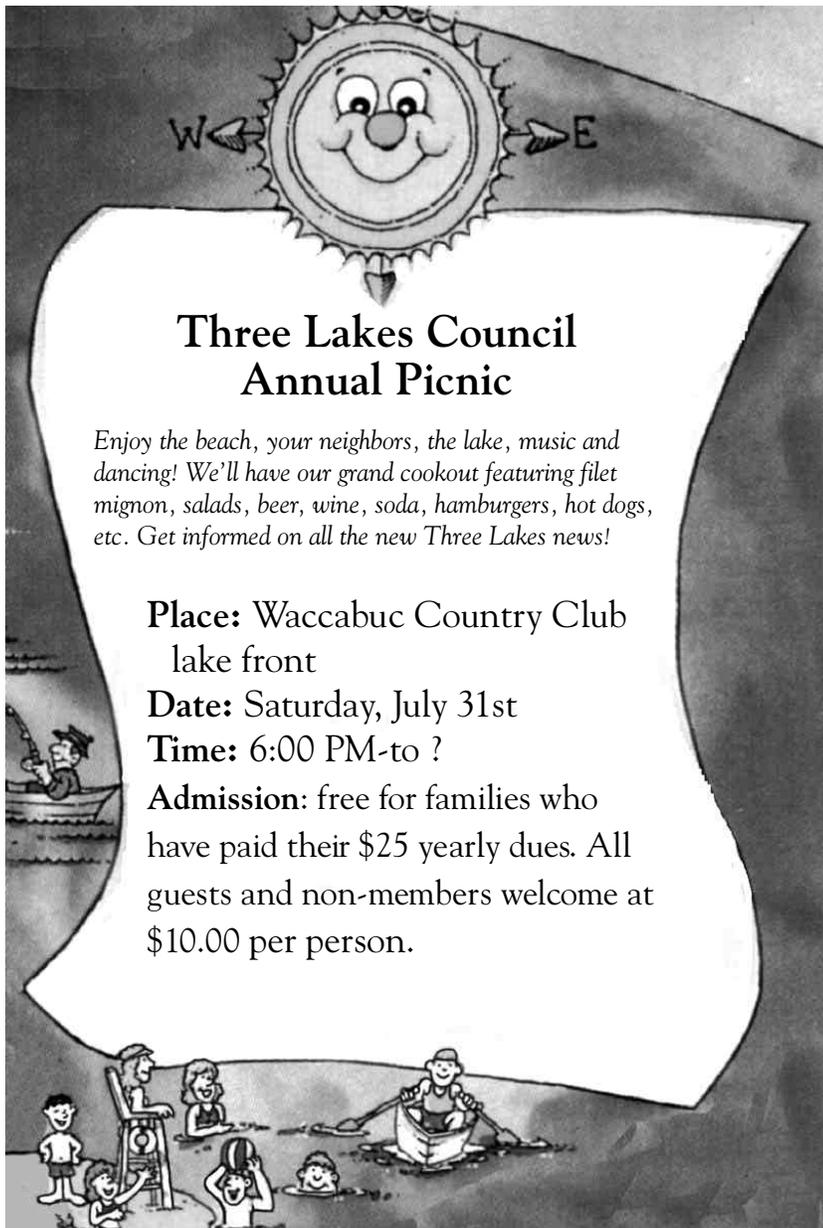
Phragmites like wetlands (look for them just before the canal between lakes Waccabuc and Oscaleta, and on the right side of Oscaleta Road as you're headed south.) It's a plain, slender brown stalk with a fluffy brown stem. Phragmites spread at an incredible rate. Shoots that fall over become horizontal runners. Shoots and rhizomes grow from the nodes, spreading the plant far beyond its original bounds.

Invasives have little trouble pushing out more vulnerable native competitors because they have no enemies in their new environments. A single intruder can send ripples through an entire ecosystem, undermining the biodiversity that is the underlying mechanism that makes the ecosystem work.

Both loosestrife and phragmites can be contained by ripping them out by the roots (the plant will regrow unless the roots are removed). Dispose of the plants in your trash can. Leaving them on the ground will allow them to re-seed or re-root.

## COUNCIL NEEDS HELP!

By now, you are familiar with the objectives of the Three Lakes Council. In order to continue to achieve these goals, the Council has a very devoted Board of Directors who work diligently—but there comes a time when they need some help. They could use some help in keeping records of water testing, fishing data, aeration operation, mailings to members, etc. If you have the inclination at the time, please call Gladys Wolkof at 763-3855, and register your willingness. Be assured you will hear from one of the Committees who are in need of assistance. We thank you in advance.



**Three Lakes Council  
Annual Picnic**

*Enjoy the beach, your neighbors, the lake, music and dancing! We'll have our grand cookout featuring filet mignon, salads, beer, wine, soda, hamburgers, hot dogs, etc. Get informed on all the new Three Lakes news!*

**Place:** Waccabuc Country Club  
lake front

**Date:** Saturday, July 31st

**Time:** 6:00 PM-to ?

**Admission:** free for families who have paid their \$25 yearly dues. All guests and non-members welcome at \$10.00 per person.

# A Letter from the President of Three Lakes Council

Welcome to the 1999 Three Lakes Council Newsletter and what hopefully will be a wonderful summer on the lakes.

As usual there is more going on, in, and around the lakes than we can keep up with.

I would like to answer some of the most commonly asked questions with which I and the others on the council are regularly challenged. I've made no attempt to prioritize the following list since everyone has their own primary concerns.

## 1. What should we do about the weeds?

I have done extensive reading about the aggravating intruder that upsets the enjoyment of many boaters and swimmers (called the *Eurasian Water Milfoil*). All of the research leads to one of two solutions:

*Hand Harvesting:* It needs little or no explanation, only a little hard work and lung power! You grab the plant at the lake bottom level and pull it out by the roots. Basically you're weeding underwater. Any cutting of this weed will only spread the problem, since each piece not contained will float away and re-root itself. Remove the weeds from the water and compost it immediately.

*Benthic Barrier Placement:* A "mat" can be placed on the lake bottom to cover, retard, and kill any nuisance vegetation. These mats can be made from one of many types of material: plastic, nylon, fiberglass, cloth, etc. They work by compressing the plants and blocking the sunlight penetration to them, thereby not allowing the plants to photosynthesize. Barriers can be effective in one month and then moved to another location so that they control the growth in two or three locations during the same growing season.

The best method of construction is as follows: obtain four ten-foot sections of "rebar". Lash or weld them into a square frame. Apply a black nylon material to the frame and place it over the selected site. There is a black perforated nylon available for tennis wind screens that will allow the hydrogen sulfide gas that is produced under the mat to escape

so the barrier does not get displaced by the gas production.

## 2. What should we do about our dying Hemlock pine trees?

For those who don't know, the parasite called *wooly adelgid* is attacking our hemlocks, which are the largest remaining stand in Westchester County. The trees may be sprayed with an oil that suffocates that parasite, or the roots of the tree may be injected with a substance that works its way up to the needle area and kills it.

As you may suspect, neither of these two options are inexpensive, but we are considering two possible options to defray the cost long-term. One is to make a consortium of homeowners and price this job as a group, which we did this year. The other is to set up a special fund via donations to the TLC similar to what we do to support the aerators and fish stocking program. We would like to hear your opinion on this matter. Please vote on your membership form whether you think this is a good idea or not.

Please see Keith Eddings' in-depth article on page 8 in this newsletter.

## 3. What should we do to maintain our septic systems?

Septic systems are a tremendous problem to our lakes. They are considered a non-point source of pollution. To diminish the effect they have on our lakes, you must have them pumped out every year if you are a lakefront owner, and every 2 years if you are not. If you want to join a group of homeowners in order to get a group discount on septic pumping, please call Mimi Shane at 763-6564. Since many homes have old and inadequate septs, it is a good idea to get yours assessed to see if there is any leakage into the soil and lake. If this is the case, you may want to consider replacing your septic with a much safer and more efficient system. Your lake will love you for it.

The TLC has become part of the Westchester County Water Management Committee, which is under the great umbrella of the Westchester County Department of Planning, and the City of New York Department of Environmental Protection. There is a lot

of time and energy being spent on septic research and cleaning now so some federal, state, or local money may become available. We are going to investigate grants, etc. to help us with all of these issues. Don't hold your breath though!

For the future, we would also like to consider setting up a reserve that our members can fund so we can guarantee all septs would be pumped out. TLC would pay for the service, and the cost would become tax deductible. Please vote your opinion on this on your membership form.

Faulty septic systems are by far the most serious long-term threat to our lakes!

## 4. Why do some areas of our lakes turn green in the late August and early September?

I received a call from a resident last summer telling me of their suspicion that someone had dumped paint into the water. Upon investigation, we found that the green opaque "paint" was in fact a wind-swept aggregate of blue-green algae.

Every year in 15-foot deep or greater Adirondack-type lakes like ours, a distinct temperature stratification is formed. It starts in the spring or early summer, where the top layer becomes much warmer than the bottom. As the weather gets warmer the top layer (called the *Epilimnion*) is separated from the lower layer (called the *Hypolimnion*) by a very thin middle layer (called the *Metalimnion*). These layers are quite stable all summer until the cooler night air in the fall starts to cool the top surface. When the top layer cools, it also becomes more dense, pushing itself toward the bottom. This movement pushes the nutrient-rich bottom layer up toward the surface. Because of the lack of oxygen at the bottom of the lake, this bottom layer has a hydrogen sulfide gas (which smells like rotten eggs). When this nutrient-rich and gassy bottom layer is pushed to the surface, it reacts with the surface water and an algae bloom is created. This turnover process, as unaesthetic as it may be, is natural and means that the lake is in good health.

—Dr. Peter Treyz

- Newsworthy notes
  - Annual Picnic Reservations
  - Clean Water Preservation Efforts
  - Hemlocks for Health
  - Goodbye Country, Hello Suburban Sprawl
  - Bioinvasion or Aliens—They're Here, and They're Taking Over
  - Storm Drains and Road Salt: Affecting the Lakes
- Inside Find:

Three Lakes Council Annual Newsletter

Membership Dues form enclosed



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Trees

Water

Education

Oxygen<sup>12</sup>

Wildlife