



Let's Meet At Lake Mansfield!

The Newsletter of Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA) spring 2008

www.lakemansfield.org

Dear Lovers of Lake Mansfield,

Hard work pays off, and the past year has seen an amazing amount of hard work happening at Lake Mansfield. In the spring, LMA and the Great Barrington Garden Club cooperated in planting a new elm tree and 150 folks attended our annual LMA Clean-up Day. Throughout the summer LMA volunteers labored at installing the beach area split-rail fence. Autumn saw members of the Great Barrington Rotary Club, Simon's Rock, and the GB Parks Commission cooperating in the Fall Clean-up and Spruce-up. Wintertime was for meetings and planning as members of LMA continued their 2 years of service on the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force, but it was also for skating and fishing and LMA volunteers worked to clear the lake ice for winter fun.

Through all the seasons, beautiful Lake Mansfield continues to entice more and more community members and visitors to this amazing and vibrant natural habitat which is home to turtles, fish and frogs, muskrats, fox and coyotes, ducks, loons, herons, orioles and kingbirds. See inside to learn about the Lake Mansfield Improvement Plan and the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trail Plan, both aimed at preserving our natural habitat and supporting greater safety and outdoor recreation.

We hope you will join us in our efforts this year. Be an advocate for Lake Mansfield's improvement, protection and preservation and help provide for the connections and experiences that will foster a commitment to the conservation of our wild spaces for generations to come. Experience the joy of becoming a Lake Mansfield Alliance member and volunteer!



2008 Lake Mansfield Events

Sunday, May 4th, 11:00 – 3:00:

LAKE MANSFIELD

CELEBRATION & CLEAN UP DAY

Clean Up, Pot Luck Lunch, Community Meeting,
Boating & Guided Trail Walk along the
Lake Mansfield Shoreline, a Vibrant Habitat

A great day of hard work and joyfulness!

Rain Date: Saturday, May 10, 2008

Saturday, May 17th, 10:00-Noon

Guided Trail Walk: Lake Mansfield

Conservation Forest

Hosted in cooperation with **Great Barrington Trails and Greenways** as a part of a continuing series of healthy community walks. (Meet at beach parking lot.)

Saturday, June 7, 9:00 – Noon

Trail Work Day

**The beginning of a series of trail work days
for the Lake Mansfield Conservation
Forest Trail Project**

Consider becoming a Trail Builder. Help us improve our Lake Mansfield Recreational Area. See inside for further details or contact Christine Ward, ch.wards@verizon.net

TRAIL BUILDING:

STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Students will be guided in trail building techniques by acclaimed trail designer, Peter Jensen. Skills to be developed will include: harvesting and milling of materials, bridge and ramp building and trail implementation within the wetland habitat. See inside for further details.

Tuesday, September 22nd, 11:30

Senior Picnic and Plant Day

Join us as we host a day for community seniors. Tree planting, hotdogs, potluck casseroles, dessert
Hosted along with **Great Barrington Garden Club**

**For further information on any LMA events
Contact Christine Ward (ch.wards@verizon.net)**

See Inside: LM Improvement Plan Components Naturalist Notes LM Conservation Forest Trail Project
 Connections: Poems & Stories Q & A: Improvements for Lake Mansfield Road
 Featured Volunteers and Supporters LMA Membership Information

Lake Mansfield Improvement Plan: Benefits for all

Over the past 18 months the **Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force** has explored ways to improve conditions at Lake Mansfield in order to accommodate existing lake uses, expand recreational opportunities, and guard public safety.

Below is a brief description of the goals and elements of the initial design conceptualized in the Lake Mansfield Improvement Plan. The design will improve public safety and expand the recreational space through traffic flow and parking area changes. Envisioned is the creation of a shoreline trail running along Lake Mansfield's eastern shore with several designated access areas. The design provides for bank stabilization, buffer zone restoration, and runoff control. Together these measures will address the three task force focus areas (public safety, water quality, and facility improvements) in a comprehensive manner. The improvements sought by this design allow us to seek grant funding at the state, federal and local level.

Design Concept Goals:

- Provide safe, year-round access to Lake Mansfield for walkers and bicyclists
- Improve pedestrian/vehicle safety along Lake Mansfield Rd. and at the beach parking area
- Expand recreational space near the beach for picnicking, game space, play structures, etc.
- Provide safe areas for shoreline fishing, wildlife viewing, and quiet enjoyment
- Implement shoreline stabilization and buffer zone restoration along Lake Mansfield Road
- Control and filter road runoff entering the lake at the parking area, boat launch, and along Lake Mansfield Rd
- Preserve the natural character of the Lake Mansfield area

Recreational Space Expansion & Reconfiguration:

(See design illustrations at right)

1. The design expands the recreational space near the beach for picnicking, space for games, play structures, etc., by relocating the road and parking area further to the northeast of the existing beach parking area. This relocation also provides greater separation between the road and the beach/park area.
2. The design expands the parking area to accommodate current and projected peak usage without having cars parked on the road shoulders.
3. The design incorporates improved trails within the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest to provide safe walking routes to Lake Mansfield from other neighborhoods and create accessible trails for public recreation.

Shoreline Trail and Restoration:

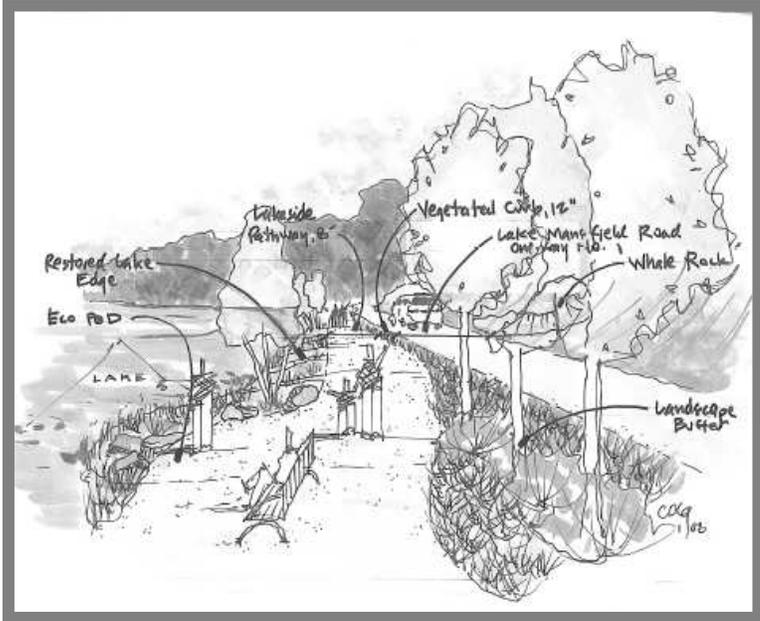
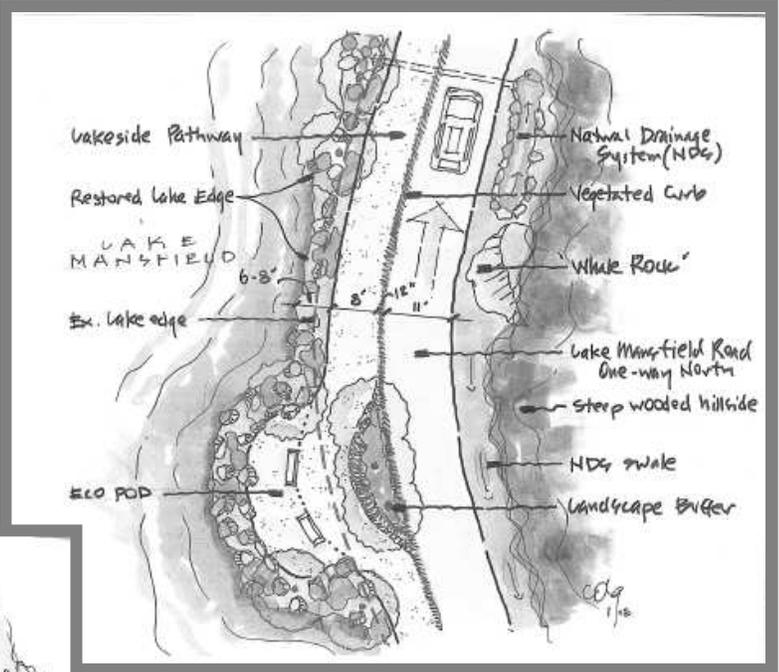
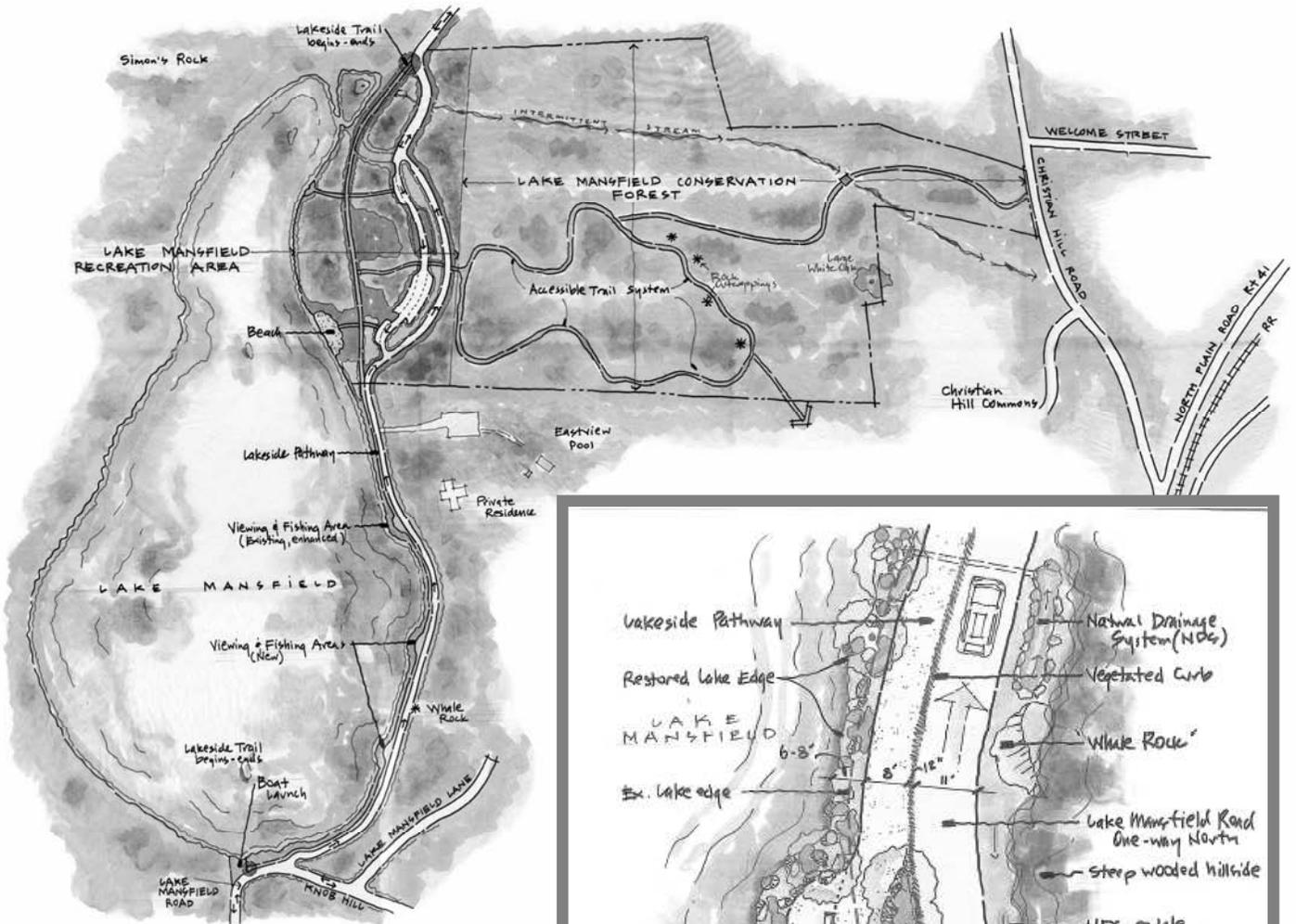
1. The design provides safe pedestrian and bicycle access to Lake Mansfield by converting the shoreline side of Lake Mansfield Road into a dedicated pedestrian/bike lane along the eastern lake shore from the intersection at Knob Hill Road to the beach/park area.
2. The design expands the number of shoreline access areas on Lake Mansfield Road along the eastern lake shore, to provide safe fishing, wildlife viewing, and resting areas.
3. The design features shoreline stabilization and habitat restoration in the areas wherever the proximity of road to the lake has led to bank erosion and loss of buffer zone on the eastern lake shore.
4. The change to one-way traffic provides critical space for the trail, shoreline access areas, bank stabilization, and buffer zone restoration.

Proposed Implementation Plan:

1. Phase I: **Relocate and expand parking area** to the east and north of the existing beach parking lot and shift one lane of traffic to the east side of the new parking area. This phase expands the recreational space for picnicking and games, improves and expands the parking, and improves safety for vehicles and pedestrians in this heavily used area.
2. Phase II: **Institute a trial period** of a one-way portion of Lake Mansfield Road (from boat launch to beach area) with a dedicated pedestrian lane. This phase allows for a test run and evaluation of the pedestrian lane and one-way road concept.
3. Phases III: **Implement some form of road change, shoreline trail, buffer zone restoration, and drainage improvements between the boat launch and beach parking area.** Final design depends upon the results of the trial period evaluation. This phase completes the shoreline recreation area and safety improvements.

The proposed improvement plan was approved in concept on March 10th, 2008 by the Great Barrington Board of Selectmen. The next step will involve specific design planning and seeking funding for Phase 1, allowing for a greatly enhanced beach area and improved beach area parking.

Providing a Park Sanctuary for Generations to Come



These Lake Mansfield Improvement Plan schematic drawings, provided by Landscape Architect, Craig Okerstrom-Lang, depict the proposed improvements which include:

- Restoring the much eroded buffer zone and enhancing native habitat
- Solving drainage and runoff problems
- Providing greater safety for all
- Providing greater access for recreation

Lake Mansfield Conservation Trail Project

By Christine Ward

On November 17th, 2007 a spirited group of conservationists worked together to dismantle an abandoned structure in order to return wetland habitat to its natural state. Student and adult representatives of Monument Mountain's Green Team as well as other local volunteers, young and older, enjoyed working together to make a difference. This work project was the first volunteer work opportunity of the **Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trail Project** which is coordinated by Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA), in cooperation with the **Great Barrington Conservation Commission**.



The goal of this project is to provide for an improved accessible trail system within the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest while protecting and preserving the forest's natural habitat. The trail system will encourage greater pedestrian access to the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area and will provide a space for appreciation and environmental education.

This fall Maria Terres, a student of Bard College at Simon's Rock, utilized the Lake Mansfield Forest for her senior thesis by conducted a study of the invasive plants. Maria's final report will include information on the impact of the identified invasive species and will result in a proposed management plan for minimizing the impact of these invasives. While Maria is providing us with valuable information for our future forest management efforts, the conservation forest is providing an "outdoor classroom", helping to foster the skills of environmentalists ready to take on today's challenges.

Peter Jensen, the project's **Trail Development Consultant**, is dedicated to providing environmentally

sound trail and land stewardship planning as well as low impact trail development and natural resource stewardship services. A licensed Massachusetts professional forester, Peter employs his broad understanding of ecosystem function and trail construction methods to design and implement trails which lie lightly upon the land and provide positive user experiences.

Trail work planned for this summer will include the clearing of portions of the new trail system and replanting of trails to be replaced. Also, an exciting **Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Student Internship Program** is being developed which will provide students with experiences in harvesting and preparing on-site natural construction materials, bridge and ramp crossing design and construction, and trail installation techniques for wetland areas. Students will work with Peter Jensen to gain an understanding of best practices utilized in trail design and installation.

The Great Barrington Conservation Commission's guidance of this project has been essential. Elaine Hines, Conservation Commission Agent, has worked to support the necessary Department of Environmental Protection applications and to provide other related services to enable the trail building planning phase. This collaborative process has allowed a renewed focus on this delightful woodland habitat, strengthening parameters for its conservation while providing enhancement for community enjoyment and appreciation.

Community volunteer service will be key to the success of this project. Trail Building Volunteers are sought for periodic work days aimed at trail implementation, wetland replication, and invasive species control. If you wish to join the **Trail Volunteer Team** please contact project coordinator, Christine Ward (ch.wards@verizon.net) Sign-up Sheets will also be available at our May 4th, 2008 Lake Clean-up and Celebration.

The Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trail Project is supported by funds from the Berkshire Environment Endowment Fund; The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Trailways Program; Berkshire Garden Club; Lake Mansfield Alliance and the Town of Great Barrington. We are greatly appreciative of this support as we work to provide our community with opportunities to connect with woodland and wildlife in this tranquil conservation forest.

Naturalist Notes

By Dale Abrams

Sometimes it's good to not remember things so well. Each year, it never fails that I am surprised by the change of seasons. In winter I have a hard time remembering just how stunning fall colors are and the same thing happens during other seasons. Every once in while, nature puts on a big show to make sure we notice that the seasons are changing.

One March morning recently, I rose very early to walk along the lake and was greeted by the sudden arrival of spring. Even as I stepped out the door, the ghostly sounds of courtship flight crisscrossed the predawn sky while the moon began to set in the west. Woodcocks make a deceptively hard to track twittering, fluttering sound with stiff wing beats in flight. Several of the birds were alternately flying above the lake neighborhood and roosting on the ground making plaintive "peent" calls from the edges of wet lawns and brushy areas at the south end of the lake. It always stuns me to see these migrants return while the lake is still frozen and the odds of snow or sleet are still quite high. Apparently the warm days and the first spring rains bring their food (worms and other soil invertebrates) to the surface in sufficient numbers to warrant the trade off for cold weather courtship.



woodcock

As I shifted my attention a bit, I could hear wild turkeys gobbling in the distance somewhere in the forests on the far side of the lake. This time of year male turkey are staking claim to meadows or small clearings in the woods where they fan their tail feathers and strut their stuff in front of a flock of gathered hens. Many neighbors report sightings of these massive birds around the lake. This winter, ice skaters discovered a single dark-skinned foot from a turkey that had fallen prey to a resident fox or other predator, and inadvertently helped another wild neighbor survive a season of scarcity.

A few minutes later, I heard and then spotted a lone red fox, still in a fluffy, rust-colored winter coat. It called out repeatedly with a characteristically loud cough-like bark, from out on the ice, in the area some call "peeper cove," on the west side of the lake. Fox (and coyote) hold their annual courtship much earlier than wild birds, beginning during the often frigid days of January. By March, fox are preparing dens for a litter of "kits" that will emerge in late spring. It isn't often that we see these nocturnal creatures, but a twilight walk is good way to hear their calls

and discover who lives around the lake. Ample evidence of these and many other mammal species (deer, raccoon, coyote, mice, weasel to name a few) was preserved as frozen tracks on the lake surface this winter.



wood duck

On this and other walks, I have gotten to know the lake and surrounding woods quite well. It's amazing all that goes on there, so much of it undetected. Under cover of darkness, salamanders and frogs congregate in huge numbers to breed on the margins of the lake and in a neighboring vernal pool each spring. Each season brings similar opportunities to view the lake's wild residents and seasonal visitors.

Spring and fall are a great opportunity to spot migrant waterfowl including hooded mergansers, and even the common loon that stopped in the past two years, as well. Local fisherman share this small body of water with other skilled anglers such as blue heron, king fishers, bald eagles, and osprey. Despite its small size, Lake Mansfield and the surrounding woods and wetlands offer tranquility and exceptional wildlife habitat.



red fox

Traveling to Lake Mansfield

Report from Ilona Brinton (age 15):

When you hear 'ice skating' in England you think of a rink, too small to fit the amount of people that shuffle round and round... You don't imagine the nip of the open air as it tingles your face, the beauty of the snowy landscape that surrounds the wide expanse of ice on which you glide, your mind untroubled by the thought of colliding with other skaters. All you can think of is the thrill of seemingly flying and the fact that you are skating on a lake that has frozen naturally and with ice at least 10 inches thick!!



Report from Lucas Brinton (age 12):

We went to America this winter to visit our grandfather (98 yr. old Bill Brinton) but that was not the only thing we did. We went ice skating on Lake Mansfield almost every day. At first it was not that smooth, but one night it rained. The lake was so smooth after the rainwater froze. It felt like glass! One day I went out on the lake when under my feet there was a crack! I was scared for a bit, but then remembered that it had rained and there was a thin layer of water in between the ice. It started to snow then. For a couple days, it was okay to skate when there was a thin layer of snow on the ice -



it was actually quite fun! But once it got thicker it got harder to skate. So we used a snow blower to clean some tracks on the ice and make a rink. I went on my skates whilst snow-blowing the lake. It was a very fun experience!

Connecting with the Natural World

DAWN ON LAKE MANSFIELD

*One only not lonely
gliding mist rising*

Sweet is the peace and silence is golden

*night shedding light spreading
nature a' stirring
idyll is fading
and day is unfolding*

-Ruth Heuberger

Linoleum print, Hans Heuberger



Lake Mansfield

**Clouds have been gathering,
mountainous and towering
almost foreboding
of troubling winds
that sweep across the hills
raising white breaking crests
across the lake surface.**

**The rain sweeps in
softening the heat of summers day,
plants bending in the heaviness of wet,
people bend in their hurry
to find cover from the rain,
where they wait, perhaps listening,
and softened by the soothing sounds
of rain falling,
symphony of tones.**

- Christopher Brinton

Salamander Tongue Twister

**Salamander smooth and spotted
Sighted at the vernal pool**

~Eliza, & Catherine, 10

Spotted Sally

**Sally the Salamander,
Spotted as can be.
Slithers and slides silently
under the Spring Moon.**



Jeepers Peepers

**Small,
Great Leapers,
For sure Keepers.**

**Mini beepers,
Jeepers creepers,
They're Peepers!**

~ Catherine Baum, age 10

STEWARDSHIP

The joy of working together in our treasured space fosters a sense of appreciation, connection and community!
LMA strives to provide a variety of these enriching opportunities throughout the year.
Here is a small sampling of the good work shared by many:



2007 Lake Mansfield Volunteers

Lake Mansfield Alliance
Great Barrington Parks Commission
Great Barrington Rotary
Great Barrington Garden Club
Bard College at Simon's Rock
Green Team Youth Volunteers
Green Agers

Lake Mansfield Alliance 2007 Treasurer's Report



Income	
Donations/Memberships	\$ 1,993.25
Fundraising	
LMA tag sale	761.50
Cabin Fever Dinner	<u>2,301.00</u>
Total 2007 Income	\$ 5,505.75

Expenses	
Fees (Accounting)	\$ 180.00
Postage & PO Box	248.46
Printing (NL, post cards, posters.	
Improvement plan)	857.89
Services	301.41
Supplies	231.15
Project Costs (split rail fence,	
sign project, repairs)	<u>1,488.23</u>
Total Expense	\$ 3,307.14

www.lakemansfield.org

Our status as a project of **Great Barrington Land Conservancy (GBLC)** has greatly supported our efforts. **GBLC** is a vehicle for preserving and enhancing our community's natural resources and distinctive character. GBLC website coming soon:
greatbarringtonlandconservancy.org

*To help us make the most of our LMA Newsletter expenditure we hope you:
Read, enjoy and PASS IT ALONG . . .*

Memorial Day Float 2007

report From Catherine Baum, age 10

Now, I hope that all you Lake Mansfield lovers watched the Lake Mansfield float. Boy that was a hit!

Most of the kids in our neighborhood came to my house (the Baum's). First we laid down the mural and painted blues and greens for the water. Then fish, plants, sun, sky, animal, and other key things that are around our dear Lake Mansfield. Then it was time to tape and staple it to the boat and POP! That was done! The boat was the luckiest find ever. We found it because our friend knew somebody who has many old things. The boat could not be used at all, it was too old, and it had seen its last day already.

Time for the sail. We used an old sheet and sewed it around a pole which was to be put on our very creative boat. Before that we dipped



our hands in the paint and drip, drip, drip, splat right on to the sail did our handprints go. Oh! The paint colors were red and blue, very patriotic! Then Ben and Joel drew on the sail our famous Lake Mansfield logo. Then up, Up, UP it went high above the boat! The boat was done, done, done!

Time to wait until Memorial Day. Early on the 28th of May we got up and loaded the boat in the back of our car. Once we got to where the parade meets, many children were arriving. Some on bikes, some on foot, But 2 little girls, Talia and Sophie were riding in the boat smiling, giggling and waving! Then two strong boys, Ben and Nicky with straps around their shoulders, were pulling the float along. Then in the very front was Isabel and me, (Catherine) holding the sign, held up by a canoe paddle. With Suzi yelling "Clap if you love the Lake!" which everybody did! That was great.

Q & A: Proposals for Lake Mansfield Road

By Nina Evans

What are the problems that need to be remedied?

The most important is safety. Two independent traffic studies have shown that 70 % of vehicles traveling on the road exceed the posted speed limit by more than five mph. The road is very narrow and winding, bordered to the east by ledge and to the west by a narrow or absent buffer zone, leaving pedestrians, fishers and cyclists no safe space. Three vehicles in the last two years have gone into the lake, fortunately without personal harm. Surveys and public forum participants overwhelmingly favor a dedicated, and therefore safer, lane for non-vehicular use (walking, biking, fishing, wildlife viewing) along the road.

A further and significant concern is that the health of Lake Mansfield suffers from the current road conditions. The buffer zone, needed to filter road runoff, is nearly gone, allowing unfiltered runoff such as tar, salt, and fertilizers to enter into the lake. Asphalt is eroding from the road edge, falling into the lake, exacerbating lake contamination from run-off.

What are the proposed road changes?

A permeable pathway for biking and walking, plus special areas for safe fishing and wildlife viewing will be created along the Lake Mansfield shoreline. The lake-side buffer zone will be rebuilt and remediated through the replanting of native vegetation. To accommodate this, Lake Mansfield Road will be one-way going north from Knob Hill to a reconfigured beach parking area. A section of the road itself would become part of a linear park connecting the boat launch, shoreline, beach area, and forest trails. (Landscape architect Craig Okerstrom-Lang has created beautiful schematics, available to the public, which make this proposal much clearer. See p. 3) The road will continue to be two-way north of the beach parking lot to Christian Hill Road.

How will these changes affect emergency response vehicles?

Early on in the review process input was sought from the town's emergency (ambulance, fire, and police) services. Personnel from the ambulance services drove their vehicles several times over different routes and found that they could get from Fairview Hospital to Fairview Commons Nursing Center in exactly the same

time (eight minutes) going via Lake Mansfield Road or by an alternative route. The fire chief said the proposed changes will not compromise fire-response services. Effects on police service delivery are more difficult to determine, depending on police cruiser locations and emergency situations; however, with the use of alternative routes and preplanned emergency response routes negative effects can be effectively minimized.

What effect will a partial one-way Lake Mansfield Road have on downtown traffic?

On average, 1000 vehicles travel along Lake Mansfield Road each day*; evenly divided between northbound and southbound. Of these vehicles, at most half of these vehicle trips would be affected. In the very unlikely event that all of them then went instead to Main Street it would mean an increase of 500 over the roughly 25,000 cars per day on Main Street, representing only a 2% rise per day. More likely is that many of the cars would go instead via Division Street, perhaps halving the above estimate to about a 1% variation. (*Information comes from two traffic studies conducted by Berkshire Regional Planning on Lake Mansfield Road)

Have alternatives been considered that would allow for keeping all sections of Lake Mansfield Road open to two-way traffics?

The Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force has carefully reviewed a number of solution scenarios. Town Engineer input has been essential to this analysis. After continual investigation of options, and due to the limited and sensitive nature of the space along the Lake Mansfield shoreline, the use of a one-way road from the boat launch to the beach area is the most fiscally appropriate and environmentally sensitive option.

How will the proposal affect us?

Although there will be some inconvenience in adjusting our travel routes, Lake Mansfield will be strengthened as a prized community destination. The proposal will provide safe access to drivers, walkers, beach-goers, nature-lovers, fisher folk and bicyclists alike, and will enhance and protect the natural habitat and recreational area which is one of the glories of Great Barrington.

Feature Volunteers: A Few of the Many!

Dale Abrams is a long term LMA steering committee member and one of Lake Mansfield's enthusiastic naturalists. Dale's years of service include additional work on the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force, the LMA Trails Subcommittee and Great Barrington Land Conservancy. Dale is dedicated to the conservation efforts directed at preserving the Lake Mansfield ecosystem



Brian McElhiney is the talented carpenter who designed and built our beach welcome sign. Brian participates industriously at our Lake Day Clean-ups, especially when its time for hauling "buried treasure" from the water's depths!



Suzi Banks Baum has been the essential coordinator of Lake Clean-up and Celebration even before the formalization of LMA. Her joyful spirit is clear in all her efforts. Suzi works eagerly to involve our youngest members; in 2007 she organized the premier Memorial Day LMA Float, an activity which encouraged LMA kids to celebrate our efforts at community service.



before the formalization of LMA. Her joyful spirit is clear in all her efforts. Suzi works eagerly to involve our youngest members; in 2007

Elaine Hines, agent for the Great Barrington Conservation Commission and frequent LMA volunteer, is working to guide and support the **Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trail Project**. Her thoughtful approach to wetland protection and remediation insures the project will proceed with the appropriate care and understanding.



Become a Member of Lake Mansfield Alliance 2008

Name _____ Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Suggested Annual Dues (___ I wish to remain an anonymous donor.)

- \$20 Individual
 \$35 Family
 \$50 Supporter
 \$100 Conservationist
 \$250 Guardian
 \$500 Steward
 \$_____ Trail Project Dedicate Donation
 \$_____ other

Make tax deductible donations payable to: GBLC Lake Mansfield Fund, LMA,, PO Box 944, Great Barrington, MA 01230

In addition to my membership, I would like to volunteer to help with:

_____ **Lake Mansfield Fundraisers**
 _____ **LMA Steering Committee**
 (Cabin Fever dinner & others)
 (meets monthly to plan events and direct LMA efforts)

_____ **Trail Building Team: Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest**
 _____ **LMA Communications**
 (website, mailing lists, newsletter)



Lake Mansfield Spring Celebration and Clean-up Day!

Sunday, May 4th, 2008

11:00 till 3:00

(Rain Date: Sat, May 10th)

11:00 – 12:30

CLEAN-UP: Meet at the beach.

**Bring tools: rakes, shovels, wheel barrows, wagons,
work gloves ... and enthusiasm!**

12:30 – 3:00

~Potluck Lunch (*contributions welcome!*)

~Community Meeting

~ Trail Walk & Exploration

~Kayaks, courtesy of



Join your friends and neighbors for a fun day of community action!



www.lakemansfield.org

**Lake Mansfield Alliance
PO Box 944
Great Barrington, MA 01230**

~ A project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy~

“Working to preserve, protect and enhance Lake Mansfield as a vital natural habitat and community resource.”

See inside for 2008 Lake Mansfield events & LMA Newsletter, ENJOY and PASS IT ALONG . . .