



# Let's meet at **LakeMANSFIELD**

The newsletter of Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA)

Spring 2010

## Hurray for Lake Enthusiasts!

What do you love about Lake Mansfield? A swim or picnic? A serene evening paddle? Whether we are fishing, skating, walking or birding, our Lake Mansfield experience depends on the health of our watershed. Healthy waters support the life that allows our lake to be such a vibrant natural habitat. Look for a muskrat, fish or turtle. Catch a glimpse of an eagle or black bear - so much is waiting for us there!

Lake Mansfield Alliance is working for its sixth year to preserve, protect and enhance the lake as an essential open space and recreational area. See inside for the many ways our community is supporting this effort and to learn how to support a healthy lake watershed. Jump in! The work is joyful and profoundly rewarding. Together we surely can continue to accomplish amazing things.



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### **2010 Lake Mansfield Events**

#### **Sunday, May 2nd, 10:30-3:00**

Lake Mansfield Celebration & Clean Up Day  
Pruning clinic, puppet making, potluck lunch,  
community meeting, afternoon walk & kayaking  
A great day of hard work & joyfulness!

Rain date: Saturday, May 8th

#### **Lake Mansfield Forest Trails**

We continue to work at building  
these community trails  
Specific work dates to be announced  
To volunteer: ch.wards@verizon.net

#### **Saturday, May 29th, 4:30 pm, Ramsdell Library**

The Watershed Waltz  
Puppets! Performers! Live music and more!  
For kids of all ages.

#### **Save the Date**

Saturday September 11th  
Premiere GB Walk About  
LM trails will be included in this  
community GB Trails event  
Look for more information to come.

#### **Monday, September 13th, 10:00-2:00**

Senior Picnic & Planting Day  
Morning planting of blueberry bushes,  
lakeside picnic & guided walk  
Co-sponsored by Great Barrington Garden Club  
*All are welcome!*

# Summer Fun for Everyone

Christine Ward



Berkshire South lifeguards help insure a safe waterfront.



Children's swim lessons will be offered again this year.

**2** On sunny summer days, Lake Mansfield Beach is teeming with swimmers and picnickers. Each year the Great Barrington Parks and Recreation Commission provides services at Lake Mansfield as part of its annual budget. For the past several years Berkshire South Regional Community Center (BSRCC) has been awarded the waterfront summer program contract to provide lifeguards at the beach area throughout the summer.

## Here is an excerpt from last year's BSRCC's Summer Management report:

"It was an extremely successful year at Lake Mansfield. We had no incidents in the water which was a great accomplishment for the lifeguards on duty. There were several overcast and rainy days, but they only made the sunny ones seem that much more spectacular. The park was regularly filled with families enjoying the stunning views of the lake while watching their children construct sandcastles and play in the water. It is truly a great place for kids and adults alike and Lake Mansfield is becoming a fantastic part of the community, bringing together the people of the surrounding area to enjoy this magnificent location. Swimming Lessons were provided as a new offering in 2009. A total of 52 children, age 5-12 were served through this program which included two sessions. "We had three different levels, each of which had a half hour lesson. The lesson always started with a focus on safety on land. Once they entered the water, the children worked on kicking, reaching, gliding,

floating, blowing bubbles, and putting the whole stroke together. At the conclusion of each session, surveys were handed out. We asked, what did your child learn or accomplish through this program? One parent responded: They learned everything from safety to basics of breathing and up to strengthening strokes. The teachers are excellent. They are very enthusiastic and comprehensive in the lesson. This is an exceptional lesson!"

## The Lake Mansfield Beach area is a community treasure.

The annual May Clean-up and Lake Celebration day, hosted by LMA, sees over 150 volunteers each year. LMA has contributed the welcome sign, partnered with the parks commission to provide animal-proof trash/recycle bins and joined with the GB Garden Club to plant trees and shrubs. The Town DPW provides excellent maintenance of our beach area. The Parks Commission budgets for the portable toilets and swimming area weed fabric. This year several dead trees were removed to help insure the safety of all. The coordinated work of many makes Lake Mansfield a wonderful resource. We are looking forward to many sunny beach days in 2010.

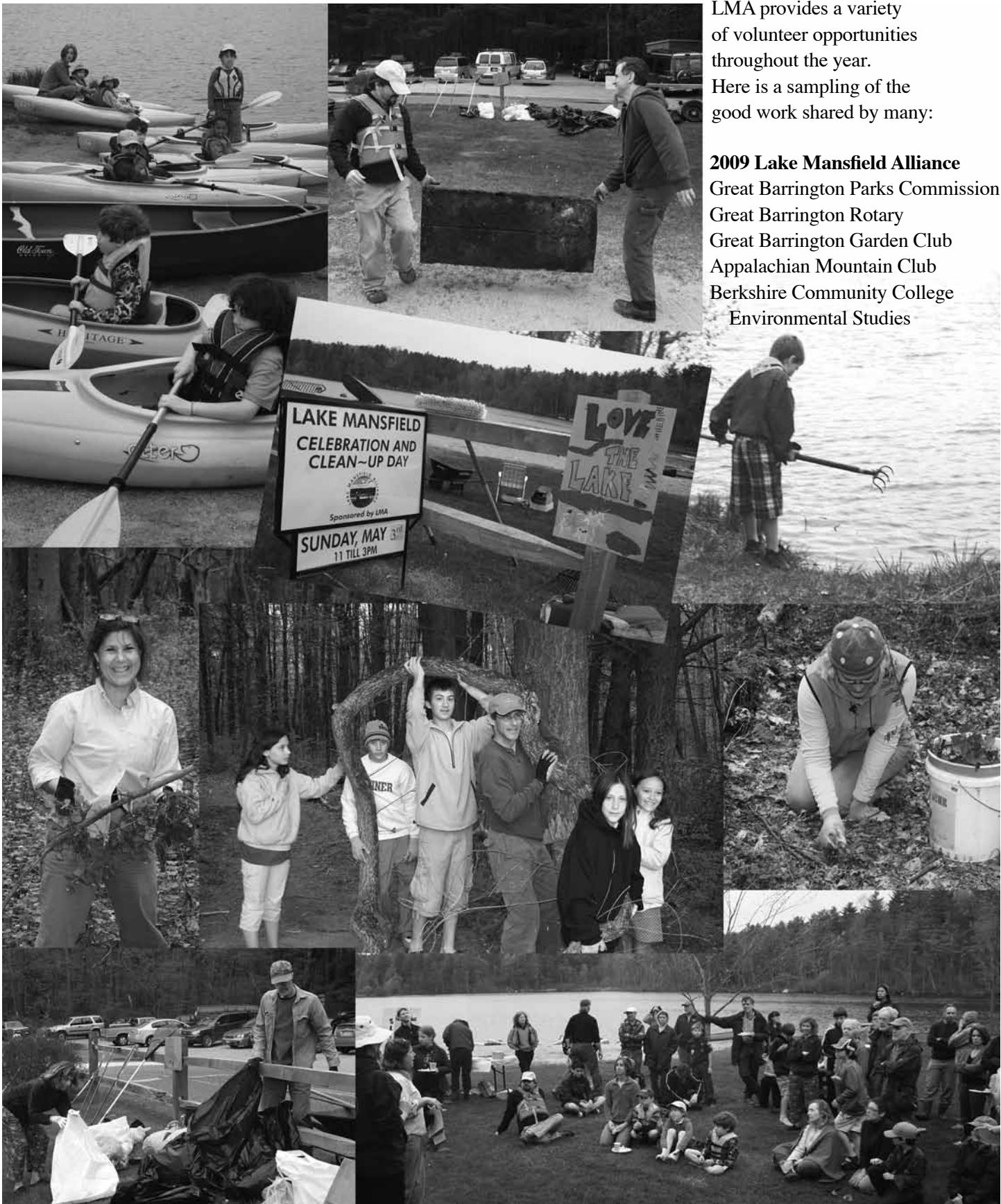
If you would like to plan a large group event at the Lake Mansfield Beach area, please complete and submit a park usage request form which is found on the Parks Commission page of the town's website: [www.townofgb.org](http://www.townofgb.org). To learn more about the summer program go to [www.berkshiresouth.org](http://www.berkshiresouth.org)

# 2009 Stewardship Volunteers

LMA provides a variety of volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Here is a sampling of the good work shared by many:

## 2009 Lake Mansfield Alliance

Great Barrington Parks Commission  
Great Barrington Rotary  
Great Barrington Garden Club  
Appalachian Mountain Club  
Berkshire Community College  
Environmental Studies



# LMA in Action

Dale Abrams

## Capturing Pollution at the Source

Is there anything that can be done about the summer weed problem at Lake Mansfield? Lake users have raised this common concern year after year. Swimmers, fishermen, and boaters alike end up with tangled legs, fishing lines, or paddles, especially during August at the height of the summer growing season. Lake Mansfield Alliance volunteers have put a great deal of effort into better understanding this problem. Through workshops hosted by the Lake and Ponds Association of Western Massachusetts and field studies with Simon's Rock science professor Don Roeder, we've learned about lake ecosystems and how water quality effects the growth of aquatic plants.

**4** Aquatic plants are a natural part of shallow, warm water lakes, such as Lake Mansfield. The problem arises when unfiltered storm water runoff, with a heavy load of sediments and nutrients, enters a lake. Fine sediments and chemical nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus are primary contributing factors leading to aquatic weed problems, especially in shallow lakes where sunlight easily penetrates to the bottom. Some of the more invasive aquatic plants, such as Milfoil and Coontail, thrive when lakes receive nutrient rich runoff.



*Lake swimmers encounter rafts of weeds in late August.*

LMA and the town's Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force have identified the boat launch, beach parking area, and a little-known storm drain that enters the lake from upper Castle Hill Road, as the primary sources of unfiltered storm water pollution at Lake Mansfield. Following rain storms during all seasons, volunteers have observed and photographed large plumes of sediment entering the lake at these three locations. The sloped terrain in these areas sends storm water rushing over paved surfaces and dirt parking areas, pulling silt and sand into the flow and pouring them into the lake.

LMA is working hard to support the town in finding expertise and grant funding to address this issue at the source. Consultation with water quality experts has pointed the task force toward design ideas and potential funding sources. Town planner Chris Rembold is applying his expertise to drafting proposals for two grant programs under the federal Clean Water Act. Administered by the state, both grants have the potential to offer significant funding for design, engineering, and implementation of systems to capture sediments at the boat launch and upper Castle Hill areas before they enter the lake. We believe these projects are strong candidates for funding. In time, a similar project will be undertaken for the beach parking area. These efforts hold the greatest potential to reduce the weed growth concerns raised so often by lake users. We will continue to keep you posted about our progress with funding and about opportunities for volunteer involvement as the projects unfold.



*Brown sediment on the ice at boat launch after a rainstorm.*

# Naturalist Notes: Black Bears

Jesse Rogers

There are many species of animals in our neighborhood surrounding Lake Mansfield. However, an animal that we take for granted, yet is very much among us, is the Black Bear. Recently, one was spotted and photographed by the small pond that is connected to Lake Mansfield. Even though we may not see them often, black bears are living here, so we should probably get to know about them.

Black bears are 5 to 6 feet long and weigh 200 to 600 pounds. In the wild, they can live up to 20 years. Black bears are North America's most familiar and most common species of bear. Their population is distributed throughout North America, and they can be found in 40 states. They typically live in forests but can also be found in mountains and swamps. Black bears are usually black but can be blue-gray, blue-black, brown, cinnamon, or even white. Black bears are usually solitary animals with the exception of mothers and their cubs. However, when hunting they will tolerate each other if there is enough food in the area for more than one bear.

Black bears are omnivores, so their diet includes both animals and plants. Black bears are not picky eaters, and sometimes they eat human food. If they become used to eating human food, they often forget their natural fear of humans. Then they can become dangerous and end up having to be killed. To help black bears stay wild, please do not feed them. Black bears are opportunistic eaters. Their main diet is 95% plant-based, mostly grasses, roots, berries, nuts and honey. They also eat insects, and occasionally they will eat fish, young deer and moose calves. If black bears eat meat, it is usually carrion. Black bears use their prehensile lips; (yes, I said prehensile lips), to pluck berries from over hanging tree branches. They also use their powerful claws to tear open rotting logs to eat worms and grubs.

When winter arrives, black bears go into a state of "winter lethargy." Black bears are often categorized as hibernators, but they are not true hibernators. If they were, they would be able to lower their body temperature to around freezing and be able to slow their heart beat from 50 to 8 beats per minute. Additionally, black bears leave their dens to forage. Their



*Black bear crossing Lake Mansfield Road, Summer 2009.*

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body temperature remains almost normal throughout their long winter sleep. However, the main reason they are not true hibernators is because their bodies are too big to sustain the energy necessary to go into a full state of hibernation. During the middle of their state of "winter lethargy," black bears give birth to 2 blind, helpless cubs. The mother will nurse them until spring arrives, when they will emerge in search of food. The cubs will stay with their mother for 2 years. Seeing black bears in our neighborhood is fascinating. It is amazing that we share our neighborhood with these animals, even though we may not see them everyday. I hope that people come away from this article with the message that black bears and other animals that we do not see frequently are still around and are very much a part of our community. To ignore them would be to ignore a missing piece of a very big and complicated puzzle.

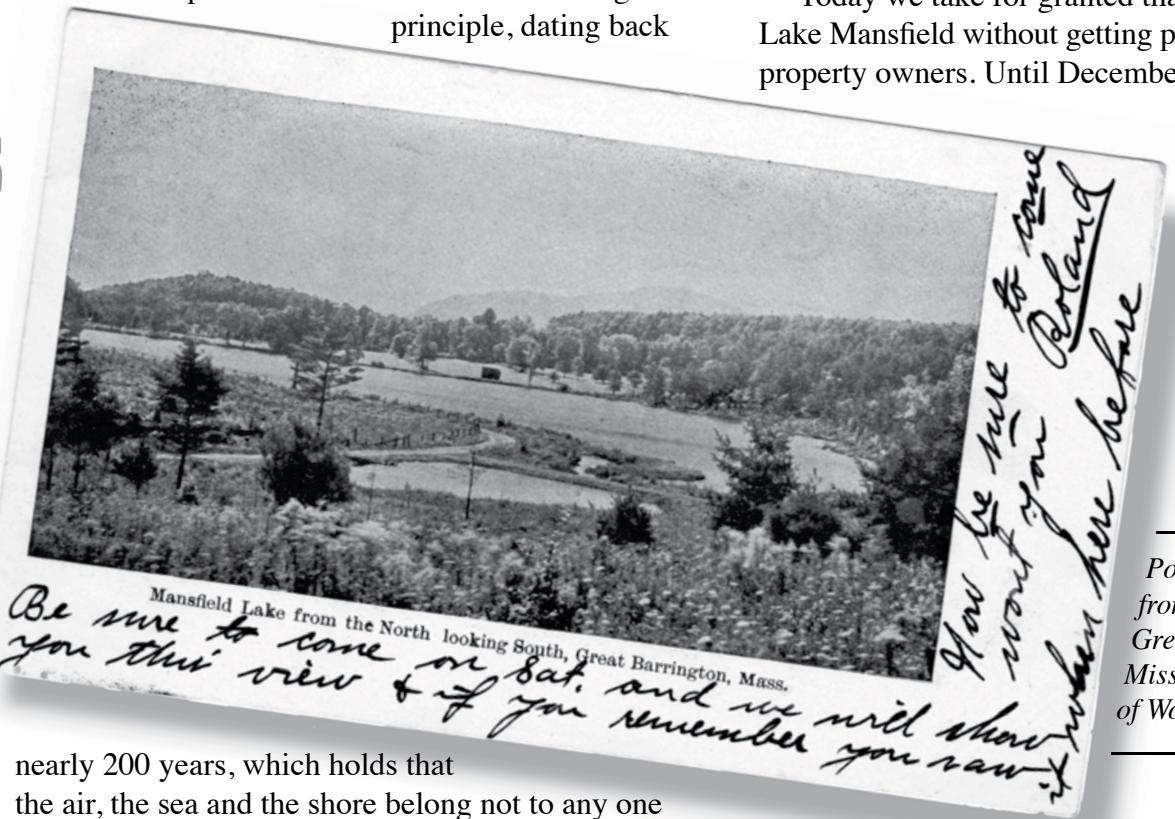
# Lake History

Ron Dlugosz

All of us who frequent Lake Mansfield know that it is a great pond where we can swim, fish, canoe, and do many other things. Did you know that Lake Mansfield really is a "Great Pond" according to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts? Since it is a pond greater than 10 acres in size, Lake Mansfield is protected by the Massachusetts Public Waterfront Act. The Commonwealth formally established a program for protecting its waters in 1866, but the philosophy dates back to the earliest days of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Colonial Ordinances (1641-1647) codified the "public trust doctrine." This is a legal principle, dating back

his Kellogg Terrace property, now known as Searles' Castle, for fire protection and to use for a fountain. The Great Barrington Fire District paid for the installation of seven fire hydrants, using the water lines from the Aqueduct Company. In March 1894, the Fire District purchased from the Mansfield Lake Aqueduct Company the water lines from Lake Mansfield for \$1 and were also granted perpetual rights to water for the Searle's property. Its use by the Great Barrington Fire District as a secondary water source limited public access to Lake Mansfield.

Today we take for granted that we can access Lake Mansfield without getting permission from property owners. Until December 1973, there

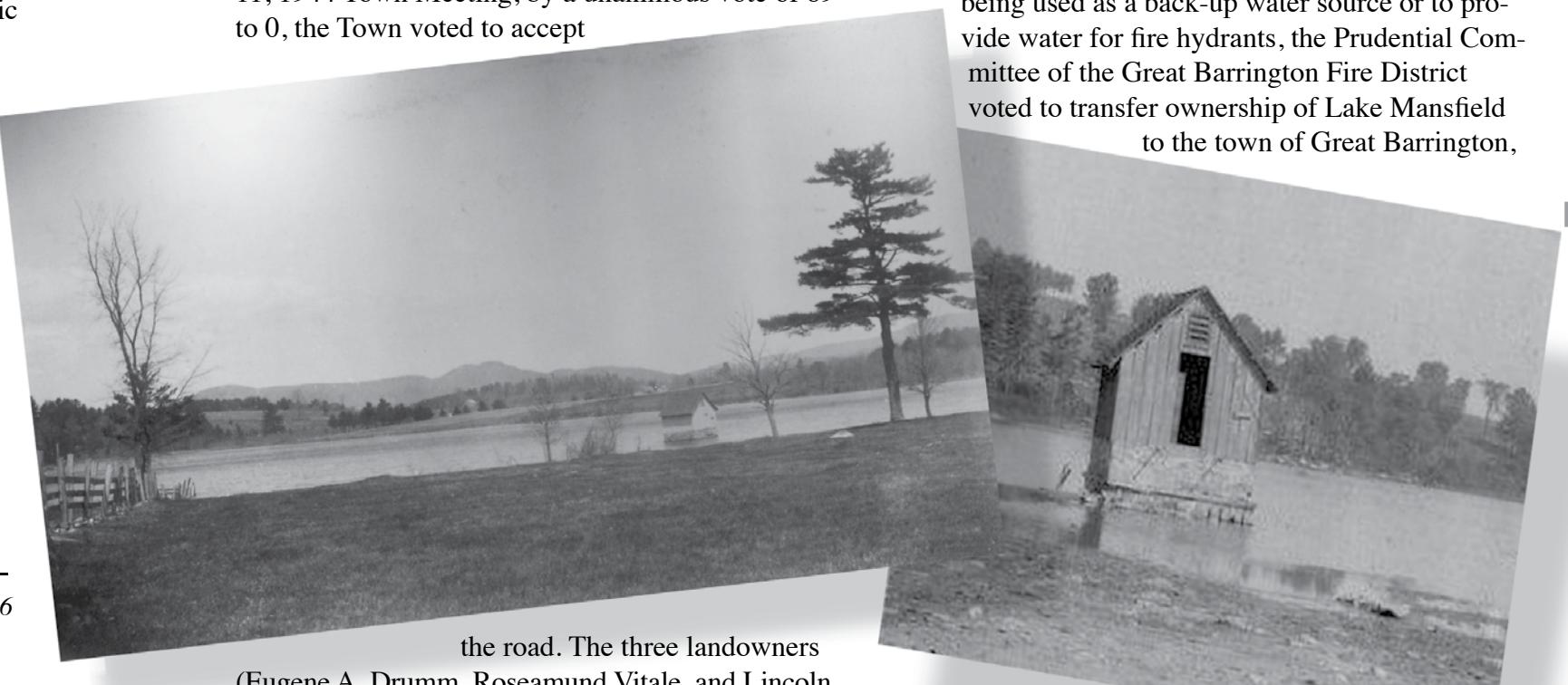


nearly 200 years, which holds that the air, the sea and the shore belong not to any one person, but rather to the public at large. These are the oldest laws of their kind in our nation to preserve and to protect the rights of the public to have access to bodies of water like Lake Mansfield. However, the right of public access can be limited if the body of water is used as source of drinking water, as was the case with Lake Mansfield for over a century.

In July 1884 Great Barrington Fire District was created to provide safe drinking water to the residents as well as water for fire fighting. In 1887 Edward Searles established the Mansfield Lake Aqueduct Company. He built a water line from Lake Mansfield to

the water. Another town committee was formed in 1938 to look at the possibility of creating a water resort at Lake Mansfield. This plan was soon dismissed because of health and water concerns. It wasn't until May 1942 that the Fire District officially opened Lake Mansfield to the public.

In March 1944, Selectman Cecil Brooks suggested creating a public beach at Lake Mansfield. Permission for this project was granted by the Massachusetts Department of Health in April 1944. On November 20, 1944 the Great Barrington Board of Selectmen formally laid out Lake Mansfield Road from Christian Hill Road to the Hollenbeck Avenue Extension. At the December 11, 1944 Town Meeting, by a unanimous vote of 89 to 0, the Town voted to accept



Postcard sent in 1906  
from  
Great Barrington to  
Miss Tina H. Weymouth  
of Worcester, MA

was no official public access to Lake Mansfield. In the early nineteen hundreds residents wanted a public beach that was close to town. The closest and most logical choice was Lake Mansfield. Several local residents, including Herbert Keith and Henry Wilcox, suggested creating a park in the Lake Mansfield watershed area. In March 1935, the town appointed a committee to determine the feasibility of creating a park. Their plan did not come to fruition. Then, in March 1937, the Commonwealth approved the use of Lake Mansfield for swimming even though the Great Barrington Fire District tightly controlled the use of

the road. The three landowners (Eugene A. Drumm, Roseamund Vitale, and Lincoln Smith) were each given one dollar for the land taken for public necessity and convenience.

Even with the roadway officially transferred to the Town, there still was no public access to Lake Mansfield. The land on either side of the road was privately owned. In June 1959, despite not owning property on the lake, the Great Barrington Recreation Association constructed a swimming area at Lake Mansfield. In May 1973, it was voted at Town Meeting to purchase property adjacent to the beach area for \$20,500; however, a related proposal to take the beach area by eminent domain was rejected. In June 1973, the Town purchased a 29.08 acre parcel of land from Carol Trosch. This property extends from the beach area to Christian Hill Road. Currently, this property is managed by the Great Barrington Conservation Commis-

sion and includes the beach parking area as well as a trail system that is currently under development.

On December 19, 1973, the beach area on the eastern shoreline was sold to the Town of Great Barrington by the Dehon Seminary of the Sacred Heart, Inc. for the sum of five hundred dollars subject to the restrictions that it be used for recreational and conservational purposes only. In January 1974, after the beach became the property of the town, Lake Mansfield road was relocated from the shoreline to its current location and a dirt parking lot was constructed for accessing the beach.

In May 2007, since Lake Mansfield was no longer being used as a back-up water source or to provide water for fire hydrants, the Prudential Committee of the Great Barrington Fire District voted to transfer ownership of Lake Mansfield to the town of Great Barrington,

which also voted to accept this gift.

The formal transfer of Lake Mansfield has been delayed because the boundaries of the lake are undefined. Currently, the lake is being surveyed so that it can be formally registered and the transfer completed. Spearheaded by the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force, with strong support from Lake Mansfield Alliance, efforts are continuing to improve public access and to protect this valuable natural resource. Lake Mansfield truly is a "Great Pond," deserving of our continued stewardship.

Ron Dlugosz is compiling a Lake Mansfield History. If you have historic photos or documents to share please contact him at: ronforgb@yahoo.com

# Caring For our Watershed

We can help protect Lake Mansfield as a vibrant watershed by learning about the current challenges and advocating for the care and changes that will improve water quality. We can help guard against the introduction of destructive invasive plants and animals. Here are some great programs being offered this year:

**Sunday, May 2nd at 11am**

**Lake Mansfield Beach**

**Watershed Puppet Making**

Children and their families are invited to create their own puppet fish, macro invertebrate or birds. Marmalade Productions Puppets Company will be perched on the banks of Lake Mansfield, helping to connect folks with the many layers of life supported by our lake eco-system. This workshop will be an activity at our annual Lake Mansfield Celebration and Clean-up Day.

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**Thursday Evening, MAY 20th at 7pm**

**Mason Library**

**Learn more about River Invasives**

Lake Mansfield is part of the Housatonic watershed. The looming invasion of our waters by exotic mussels

threatens to damage lakes, ponds and rivers in Connecticut and Massachusetts. This threatens all water resources for boating, swimming and fishing as well as wildlife and aquatic habitats. Learn about the recent discovery of zebra mussels in the Housatonic watershed as well as other threats to the river ecosystem. Power point presentation and discussion sponsored by Housatonic Valley Association. Guided paddles on the Housatonic are also offered this season. To learn more go to [www.gbtrails.org](http://www.gbtrails.org).

**Saturday, May 29th at 4:30pm**

**Ramsdell Library, Housatonic**

**Watershed Waltz Performance**

Puppets! Performers! Live music and more! The Watershed Waltz celebrates the lake's mysteries with song, puppet fish, birds, and aquatic creatures. The puppets Woodpecker and Alevin the Brook Trout tell about the importance of clean water and healthy forests for their lives and for the lives of the humans that live nearby. This program, for kids of all ages, is provided through the GB Cultural Council, Lake Mansfield Alliance and the Great Barrington Garden Club.



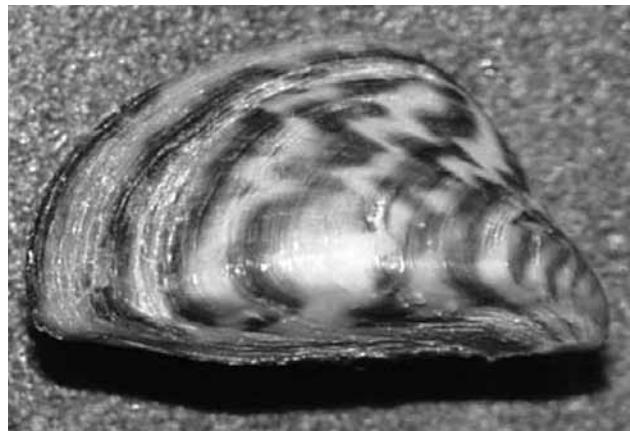
*Watershed Waltz performance scheduled for May 29th at Ramsdell Library, Housatonic*

# Q&A: Zebra Mussels & Lake Mansfield

Nina Evans

## Does Lake Mansfield have zebra mussels?

No. After zebra mussels were found in Laurel Lake, the Lake and Ponds Program of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation had twenty lakes and the Housatonic River in Berkshire County assessed for the presence or absence of adult or larval zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) and the closely-related species, quagga mussels (*Dreissena rostriformis bugensis*). Although Lake Mansfield has fairly high dissolved calcium concentrations as well as a very high pH, both risk factors for supporting invasive mussels, the lake was found, in October 2009, to be totally free of both.



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## That's nice, but would it be so bad if we did get them?

There's no reasonable way to get rid of these mussels once they infest a body of water. They were accidentally introduced to the Great Lakes in the late '80s and, lacking natural enemies in the U.S., reproduced in astonishing numbers. They attach themselves to any firm object: native mussels, boat intakes, steering gear, engines, docks & rocks. Both environmentally and economically, these mussels are among our country's most destructive aquatic invaders, despoiling ecosystems and causing damage in the tens of millions of dollars.

## So, what can I do to help prevent infesting our lakes with these pests?

You're right. The name of the game is prevention. Here's what the DCR recommends: NEVER transfer plants, animals or water from one body of water to another. Learn how to decontaminate boats and equipment before entering Lake Mansfield. CLEAN and/or DRY boats and equipment carefully. LMA will be working to have zebra mussel brochures and clean boat certification forms at the boat launch this season.

Go to: [www.mass.gov/dcr/waterSupply/lakepond/hot\\_topic.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/waterSupply/lakepond/hot_topic.htm) for complete Zebra mussel information.

## BOAT CLEANING SOLUTIONS

Disinfectant	Concentration	Contact Time
Vinegar	100%	20 minutes
Chlorine/Bleach	½ oz. per gallon water	10 minutes
Power wash with hot wash	>104°F	20 minutes
Steam/Scalding hot wash	140°F	3 minutes
Freeze	<32°F	24 hours
Salt Bath	Saturated: 1/8 cup per gallon	24 hours
Ethanol	50%	10 minutes
Lysol	Follow label	10 minutes

# Trail Building at Lake Mansfield

Christine Ward



A bridge/boardwalk provides passage through a sensitive habitat area

We've accomplished a great deal so far. Our work has been shaped by master trail designer, Peter Jensen. A bridge-boardwalk has been carefully built through a sensitive wetland habitat area. In October, an access trail was constructed in the town right-of-way providing a safe connection to the Welcome Street sidewalk and allowing for the continued development of a "central loop trail" connecting our downtown and neighborhoods with river, forest and lake.

**Now, final funding is being sought for the last phase of trail building.**

This effort will provide a forest trail system designed to encourage "people-powered excursions" to and from Lake Mansfield. The accessible system will meet national standards and will provide an amazing resource to all community members. Upon completion, the Lake Mansfield

## Just like jazz, when talented people get together great things happen.

The trail building project in the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest has been powered by an eclectic volunteer force and supported by diverse funding agents. This joyful collaborative effort has involved GBLC through the coordination of Lake Mansfield Alliance and the Town of Great Barrington through the guidance and support of the Conservation Commission and the Department of Public Works.

### Funding for this project comes from:

- MA DCR, Recreational Trails Program
- Town of Great Barrington
- Lake Mansfield Alliance
- Fields Pond Association
- Berkshire Environmental Endowment Fund
- Berkshire Garden Club
- Private Donors

### Over 500 volunteer hours have powered this project. Thanks to:

- Lake Mansfield Alliance Members
- Simon's Rock and Berkshire Community College Students
- Greenagers
- Appalachian Mountain Club
- Appalachian Trail Conservancy
- Wheeler & Taylor
- Ward's Nursery



*The new Christian Hill pedestrian trailhead allows folks a safe crossing to Welcome Street crosswalks*

Conservation Forest Trail System will continue to engage many in active resource stewardship and to provide students with an outdoor classroom for environmental studies. Join in! Consider making a dedicated donation to support this great community project.

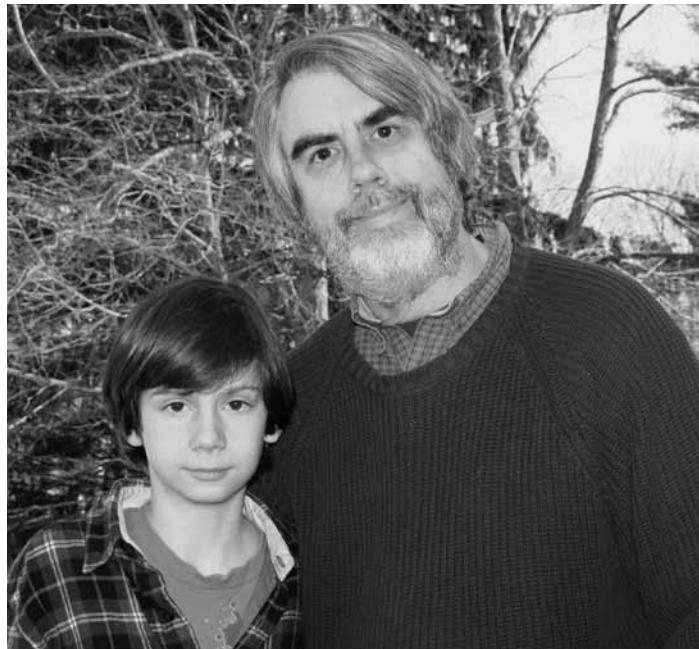
# Matching talent with good work

## Featured Volunteers



Our Homespun Jazz Players help to provide the sparkle to our Cabin Fever Fundraisers. Over the years Roger Suters, Richard Evans, Ted Murray, and Sam Rosen (not pictured above) have enjoyed "jamming" for Lake Mansfield. It's always great when we can find ways to connect our home-grown talent to the work we do.

Jesse and Lee Rogers have been active supporters of LMA for several years. In his "naturalist notes" Jesse has conveyed his love of wild creatures in his features about muskrats, bobcats and black bears. Lee is an enthusiastic photographer. His skill and appreciation of lake efforts and our natural world are conveyed by the many photos he has taken of Lake Mansfield and LMA events. Lee's photos have been essential to our Cabin Fever slideshow and LMA newsletters.



## Become a Member of Lake Mansfield Alliance 2010

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 Dedicated Donation \$\_\_\_\_ other

Make tax deductible donations 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:

- LMA Steering Committee  
(meets monthly to plan events and direct LMA efforts)
- Trail Building Team: Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest

- Lake Mansfield Fundraisers  
(Cabin Fever Dinner & others)
- LMA Communications



Lake Mansfield Alliance  
PO Box 944  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

*A project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy*

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"Working to preserve, protect and enhance Lake Mansfield as a vital natural habitat and community resource."  
See page 1 for 2010 Lake Mansfield events & LMA Newsletter. ENJOY, and PASS IT ALONG ..

# Lake Mansfield Spring Celebration & Clean-up Day Sunday May 2, 2010 10:30-3:00



## 10:30 Pruning Clinic

Meet at the beach with arborist Tom Ingersoll

## 11-12:30 Clean-up & Puppet Making:

Meet at the beach, gloves recommended.

Bring tools: rakes, wheelbarrows, wagons . . .  
and enthusiasm!

## 12:30 – 3:00 Potluck Lunch

Community Meeting

Guided Trail Walk: Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trails

Kayaks Courtesy of



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