

Panther Pond group wins award

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RAYMOND - The Panther Pond Association in Raymond has won The Outstanding Group Stewardship Award presented by the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District. The award recognizes a group that is committed to protecting the county's natural resources.

The association, which has about 90 members, will be honored at the Conservation District's Annual Meeting on May 2. Thomas Gordon, chairman of the Board of Supervisors has said, "The willingness to help and solid commitment to participate in projects for the good of the lake was and is unwavering."

The award comes upon the association's completion of Phase II of a two-phase conservation project in which volunteers worked with land owners to reduce erosion and the washing of sediment into the pond. They installed drywells, water diverters, infiltration trenches and steps, and vegetative buffers at sites along Panther Pond's shoreline and tributary streams. In the two phases, a total of 77 sites were remedied, reducing the pond's pollutant load by an estimated 106 tons of soil and 90 pounds of phosphorous. The project was funded in part by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In addition, the association held "Buffer Cruises" that highlighted completed project sites and emphasized the value of shoreline conservation. It also held workshops to teach volunteers how to install conservation materials, and it coordinates water quality monitoring and invasive plant patrols. The association assisted in placing and moving traps used to kill Eurasian milfoil in the Jordan River and on Sebago Lake and it also funds courtesy boat inspectors at the Mill Street private property launch site.

Members of the association's steering committee for Phase II were Phil Boissonneault, Peggy and Neil Jensen, Nate Whalen, Ben Severn, Brian Walker and Marie Connolly. The Project Staff included Project Managers Noralee Raymond of the Raymond Waterway Protective Association and Betty Williams, of Cumberland SWCD; **Project Scientist, Patrick Marass of FB Environmental Associates**; Grant Administer Wendy Garland, of Maine DEP; and DEP AmeriCorps Volunteers Heather Germadnik and Susan Pienta. The town of Raymond was a key supporter of the association's efforts. The Public Works Department helped fix a number of town sites to slow runoff and stabilize ditches.

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