

NEW HAMPSHIRE UNION LEADER

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Workshop seeks solutions to Province Lake pollution

WAKEFIELD — The Effingham-based Province Lake Association, with assistance from the Acton-Wakefield Watersheds Alliance and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, hosted a well-attended workshop on Saturday to collect — and eventually incorporate — community members' ideas on addressing pollution in the 1,008-acre Province Lake.

Approximately 60 individuals, many who are PLA members, property owners and land use board members from Wakefield, Effingham and Parsonsfield, Maine, turned out for the three-hour session held in Union at the Greater Wakefield Resource Center.

The planning workshop was the latest phase in a Province Lake Association's Watershed Action Plan. The lake, which is relatively shallow with an average depth of 9 feet, has a history of higher than normal phosphorous levels and frequent algae blooms, which can be toxic to humans and animals. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services has classified the lake as "impaired for aquatic life and primary contact recreation" due to high levels of phosphorous, chlorophyll-a, and cyanobacteria.

Last year, the PLA applied for and received a state grant to deal with the problems. Since then, the association has worked closely with Forrest Bell, the principal and senior scientist at the Portland, Maine-based FB Environmental Associates, Inc., and his associate Jen Jespersen.

At the meeting, Bell discussed results of water quality surveys and testing to date, as well as the correlation between bad water quality and decreasing property values.

"When we see a decline in water quality, there is research that shows property values may decrease by 20 percent," said Bell.



Forrest Bell, standing, and Jen Jespersen, seated, lead a PowerPoint presentation regarding Province Lake water quality and watershed management plan during a meeting held Saturday. The planning meeting was co-hosted by the Province Lake Association and the Acton- Wakefield Watersheds Alliance. (LARISSA MULKERN PHOTO)

Soil erosion has been identified as one of the greatest pollution sources, but not the only one. Elevated levels of phosphorous can come from stormwater runoff, lawn fertilizer, and leaky wastewater pipes. The nearby Province Lake Golf Course has already taken preventive action by not using fertilizers with phosphorous, said Bell.

Presently, the goal is to reduce phosphorous levels in Province Lake by 25 percent, from 14.3 parts per billion, to 10.8 parts per billion.

After the presentation, attendees broke out in to six working groups to brainstorm practical ideas on how to reduce pollutants in each topic area. The results are expected to be reviewed at the Province Lake Association's annual meeting in July.

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