



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Friends of Bolton Lakes welcomes in a new year with the firm hope that the pandemic will be behind us and we can begin to enjoy a bit of normalcy in and around our wonderful lake region.

FBL achieved many of the goals we set last year in spite of the difficulties presented by the pandemic. We have continued our joint work with the towns of Bolton and Vernon moving closer to watershed management rather than individual lake management. In early spring of 2020, the Middle Lake had an algae bloom that sickened a dog but dissipated rapidly. In addition, the Middle Lake had a small fanwort patch that was treated late in the summer. The Lower Lake had a curly pondweed outbreak that was treated. Overall, it was a good year for lake clarity and lake health.

Here are some relevant things to look for in 2021.

The Bolton Lakes Region Watershed Plan is well on its way to completion.

- DEEP (Department of Energy and Environment Protection) approved the request to use the remaining funds from the STEAP (Small Town Economic Assistance Program) Grant to allow the watershed plan to be initiated.
- Many of our members responded to a recent watershed survey. We thank you. The current views of our lake stakeholders will be compared with the future views from a second survey.
- A forum will be organized in the spring for receiving public comment and to discuss the plan's implementation projects. Funding to complete the watershed plan will come from town resources. More to come.

The State's Office of Policy and Management, Budget & Financial Management Division has approved funding for the Hatch Hill culvert [dam] renovation. The design was previously accepted by the DEEP Division of Dams and Dam Safety in 2018. The request for proposal is in process and expected to be finalized this spring. Construction is targeted for fall 2021 immediately following the fall drawdown.

At its first meeting last February the stakeholders of the Bolton Lakes Watershed included FBL, the towns of Vernon and Bolton, DEEP, and consultants from NEAR (Northeast Aquatic Research). Together they established short- and long-term goals to develop an effectively managed drawdown program, developed a set of protocols for maintaining the seasonal water levels of the lakes and created a procedure that could mitigate the known uptick of invasive plants and other non-native species that are infiltrating the lakes. The meetings will continue and will be part of the watershed management plan.

The equipment that detects Cyanobacteria in the lakes purchased with a Connecticut Federation of Lakes grant is being used to contribute to the national BloomWatch project collecting data on cyanobacteria. Additionally, two lake level monitors were purchased with funds from the STEAP grant. One logger was placed on the Lower Lake, the other on the Middle Lake and they have been monitoring the lake levels every hour since November. We are still working with DEEP to obtain data on the sluice gate valves to understand how they are opened and closed to regulate the level of the lakes. That data should allow us to keep lake levels more constant during the drawdown periods.

A virtual Spring Seminar is being organized to present the results of the CAES (Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station) invasive plant species survey of the Middle Lake which was completed in 2020. Invasives such as fanwort and milfoil continue to be on FBL's radar. We are attempting to have signs erected at the boat launches and have a boat launch ambassador program to alert lake visitors of the dangers of invasive plants. FBL will continue to monitor and test the water quality and clarity in the Bolton Lakes and share the findings with the towns and NEAR. The data is vital to the implementation of the watershed plan. This year we hope to make some of that data (clarity and temperature) available on our website.

We were pleased to have had members join the monthly meetings and bring their valuable insights. I urge and challenge everyone to stay involved with FBL and attend at least one monthly virtual meeting during 2021. It's easy. Just send an email to fbl@friendsofboltonlakes.org to request the ZOOM link. The meetings are held at 6:30 PM on the third Wednesday of each month.

On behalf of the Board of Directors,

Stay Safe, Stay healthy

David Forrest, President FBL