



Mountain Lake Community Association Spring 2022 Newsletter

Upcoming Events

Opening Day of Trout Season:

Saturday, April 9 at 8 am

MLCA Membership Meeting:

Friday, April 15 at 7 pm at Mt Lake Fire house

Featuring presentations and discussions on aquatic plant management, goose control, lake monitoring, new grant funding opportunity, and other matters of interest. The meeting will also be accessible via zoom. Go to MLCAWAG.org for zoom meeting link.

Aquatic Bug Survey in Jenny Jump Brook:

Sunday, April 24 at 12:30 pm [Rain date: Saturday, April 30 at 9 am]

Spring Clean-up:

May 2-7. Go to libertytownship.org for information on obtaining vouchers

Town Wide Yard Sale

Saturday, May 21 [Rain date: Sunday, May 22]

TRI Mountain Lake Sprint Triathlon

Saturday, July 16 at 8 am

This is an abridged version of our newsletter. The full-color, full-length version is available on our website at MLCAWAG.org

Board of Trustees

Robert Ballou	President
Daniele Nevins	Vice-President
Nancy O'Leary	Treasurer
Buffy Harrison	Secretary
Alice Bechok	Trustee
Lorraine Thiel	Trustee

MLCAWAG.org

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Lake Association and Town Pursue Grant Funding

In February, the Lake Association and Liberty Township, in partnership with Princeton Hydro, submitted an \$83,900 grant application to the NJDEP's Water Quality Restoration Program. A decision is expected within the next 4-6 months. If awarded, the grant will support a comprehensive assessment of the lake and its watershed by Princeton Hydro in 2023. Their work will include detailed studies to identify, prioritize, and address sources of pollutants to the lake. Additionally, NJDEP is expected to announce a new grant funding opportunity for NJ lakes this spring. The Lake Association will feature this issue as a discussion item at our upcoming membership meeting. We look forward to getting input from the community on the most important issues facing the lake and how best to target the new funding opportunity.



Goose Control is Key to a Clean and Healthy Lake

We cherish the diverse wildlife that inhabit Mountain Lake, but we have too many resident Canada geese. Their large numbers generate large amounts of poop, resulting in significant impacts to water quality. NJ has the highest density of Canada geese on the East Coast, 50% higher than the target set by wildlife management experts. In response, the Lake Association plans to guide and facilitate a comprehensive goose management program for Mountain Lake, beginning this spring. The goal is to establish and maintain a smaller, healthier popula-

tion of geese at the lake, in accordance with state and federal wildlife management standards and recommended practices. An integrated wildlife management approach, involving a mix of several control methods, applied consistently throughout the year, is the most effective way to control geese. So that's what we plan to do. The four main methods we plan to pursue are: discouraging intentional feeding, nest and egg control, habitat modification, and deterrence. All of these practices depend upon community education and engagement. As a first step, we ask that any nests found this spring be reported to the Lake Association. We will coordinate with property owners, as necessary, to conduct addling. We will also be working with a local company, *Geese Chasers*, for assistance using trained border collies, and for advice as we move forward with our program. More information will be provided at our upcoming membership meeting and posted on our website and Facebook page.

2nd Annual Town Wide Yard Sale Set for May 21

The Lake Association and the Mt Lake Fire Co Ladies Auxiliary are joining forces again this year to host the Town Wide Yard Sale. This year's big event will be on Saturday, May 21 from 8 am to noon (rain date May 22). The event was a huge success last year, and this year is expected to be even better. Participants have the option of setting up at a table at the Firehouse, or having a spot on the Town Wide Map if setting up at home. Those who set up at the Firehouse can donate any leftover items. To register, donate items in advance, or get more information, email Shannon at shanschaaf@gmail.com, or go to mlcawag.org, or find us on Facebook. We look forward to a great turnout, and lots of great deals!

President's Message



Our lake needs to go on a diet, and our lake association needs to bulk up. The two go hand in hand.

The water quality in Mountain Lake is affected by the amount of phosphorus that enters and is retained in the lake. Phosphorus is a naturally occurring nutrient, and modest levels support a healthy ecosystem. But too much phosphorus causes over enrichment, leading to algae blooms, excessive growth of invasive weeds, and accelerated eutrophication. Changing weather patterns trigger more intense storms and cause increased loadings of phosphorus to the lake; when coupled with more hot and dry spells, conditions are ripe for harmful algae blooms. This is why the Lake Association is committed to monitoring Mountain Lake and supporting efforts to reduce nutrient loadings — to help get the lake on a diet. Key issues include goose control and aquatic weed management; as well as septic systems, stormwater, riparian buffers, and the development of a comprehensive lake and watershed plan. It's a mission we are proud to undertake, because we care so much about the lake and its health.

But tackling these issues requires resources. Since taking the helm of the Association last year, I have been struck by the challenge of fulfilling our mission with a very modest budget. Last year, 168 members helped to generate \$11K from dues and donations. That's impressive, and we are thrilled to have achieved that level of support. But it's tough to build a strong lake stewardship program around an annual budget of \$11K. The cost of printing and mailing this newsletter alone takes a sizeable bite out of that. Supporting larger projects, including those aimed at reducing phosphorus loadings to the lake, is tough to do. So we need to maintain our weight as an organization — by thanking each and every member from last year and urging you to **renew your membership** for this year, if you have not already done so. And we need to grow a bit, so we're better able to support the important efforts needed to protect Mountain Lake. If you value and appreciate the lake as much as anyone, and **if you are not yet a member, please become one.**

We pledge to use your support to help the lake get on its much-needed diet!

With warm regards,

Bob

Opening for New Trustee

The MLCA Board has an opening for a new Trustee. The Board is composed of four officers and three trustees. We work together as an all-volunteer leadership team to guide the important work we do as an organization. We typically meet once a month in the early evening, and we all try chip in a little time and effort on projects and activities. The only eligibility requirements are to be a member of the Association (current or new) and share our passion for protecting and improving Mt Lake. If interested, please reach out to us individually or via email at MLCA.wag@gmail.com

Partnering with Township and Warren County College

The Lake Association values its strong partnership with Liberty Township. Leaders from the Association, Township Committee, Environmental Commission, and Recreation Commission meet regularly to discuss and strategize on priority issues pertaining to the lake. Also, a new partnership is being established with Warren County College. This summer, the college will be providing resources from its Unmanned Systems Technology Program to help monitor the lake, using drone technology to track aquatic vegetation and water quality.

2022 Lake Monitoring Program

The Lake Association will continue comprehensive monitoring of Mountain Lake in 2022. Beginning in mid-April, volunteers will collect baseline information every two weeks, and sample for total phosphorus (TP) every month. In collaboration with NJDEP's Division of Water Monitoring and Standards, sampling for cyanobacteria (bluegreen algae) will also be conducted every month.

At the center-lake station, temperature and dissolved oxygen levels will be measured throughout the water column. Clarity will be measured using a secchi disk. Phosphorus

and pH will be measured at the surface and at depth. A fluorimeter, on loan from NJDEP, will be used to monitor levels of phycocyanin, the pigment unique to cyanobacteria.

At the dock next to the boat ramp, temperature and phycocyanin levels will be monitored biweekly.

Monthly cyanobacteria samples will be provided to and analyzed by NJDEP. Results will be published on NJDEP's HAB dashboard, and reported out by the Lake Association via Facebook and the MLCAwag.org website.

If a harmful algae bloom develops, NJDEP will increase the frequency of monitoring. High levels could result in closure of the town beach, as well as advisories pertaining to swimming and pets throughout the lake.

The team of volunteer monitors will again include Larry Supp, Rich Larsen, John Ward, Art Addie, Daniele Nevins, and Bob Ballou. Guests are welcome. If you would like to join the group during one of its biweekly outings, contact us at MLCA.wag@gmail.com.

Fingers crossed for a summer of good water quality in the lake.

Appreciation for Mountain Lake

Excerpts from Letters of Support for Water Quality Restoration Grant

The members of the Mountain Lake Fire Company truly appreciate the hard work and effort taken on by the Lake Association. We acknowledge and respect the value Mountain Lake holds as a community resource. Most of our members live on or near Mountain Lake and have enjoyed swimming, fishing, boating and just the beauty it holds as one walks around it. The long-standing commitment by the Town and Lake Association to protect and restore the lake has been particularly important in recent years due to increasing concerns regarding the harmful algae blooms. We are grateful for all the hard work being done to monitor the lake and assess the major factors affecting water quality.

**Pete Hubert, Fire Chief
Mt Lake Fire Company**

On behalf of the members, officers, and trustees of the Mountain Lake Community Association, I express our full support and deep appreciation for our town's request for funding from NJDEP for a comprehensive lake and watershed plan for Mountain Lake. We are poised and proud to serve as a full partner with Liberty Township on this important project. Liberty is a relatively small municipality, about 12 square miles, almost half of which serves as the watershed for Mountain Lake. The entire 5-square mile watershed of Mountain Lake lies within the township. The lake is the community's pride and joy, and its protection is the community's most important responsibility.

**Bob Ballou, President
MLCA**

Mountain Lake is a very special place to me. It has had a positive impact on my life ever since I was born. Throughout my childhood, almost everything my family did involved the lake. Whether we were walking or biking around it, fishing in it, swimming across it, or gliding through the lily pads in our rowboat, there was always an adventure to be had. And when we weren't recreationally enjoying the water, we were committed to caring for it.

I have been the Director for the Liberty Township Summer Recreation Program for the past 19 years, and am looking forward to my 20th season in 2022. I am very passionate about keeping the program going strong to provide the children with positive, local summer fun. Mountain Lake is a key component of our program, and it is truly the kids' favorite part. Being able to swim, build sandcastles, and catch sunfish is a much-loved aspect of our summer camp.

I have had the pleasure of working with the members of the Mountain Lake Association for many years. They have showed to be deeply concerned with the health and well-being of the lake and the surrounding community. I myself, have grown up in and around the lake and also have a genuine concern for its well-being and future habitation. I support a watershed study since I know the effort that will be put forth by the members will be well rewarded to the lake itself and also benefit the citizens of the community.

**Chris McCormick
WC Health Department**

The Liberty Township Environmental Commission strongly supports the application by Liberty Township and the MLCA to the NJDEP for a Water Quality Restoration grant to fund a Lake and Watershed Management Plan for Mountain Lake. Mountain Lake is a wonderful natural resource with public access, a boat ramp, swimming beach, and aesthetic views, as well as natural flora and fauna. We believe that efforts to preserve its water quality and to understand its current condition and nutrient loading, such as the study currently proposed, will have a beneficial return on investment for the public.

**Larry Supp, Chair
LTEC**

The Program uses the lake weekly throughout the summer, and it would certainly not be a complete camp experience without being able to swim and escape the summer heat. But the lake provides the youngsters with so much more than just swimming. One of the most unique qualities about being able to use Mt Lake for our program, versus a pool, is the way it gives everyone a chance to appreciate and value nature and wildlife. Protecting our Earth is an ongoing theme at our camp, and something we always focus on to help the children understand how important it is to treat nature with dignity and respect. I see the innocent wonder and excitement in their eyes and faces, and think to myself, this just doesn't happen in a pool. These experiences are not able to be replicated without access to such a pristine, natural body of water.

The MLCA has been keeping watch of our lake for years to protect and restore the lake. It became a bigger concern within the recent years because of the potential harmful algae bloom. It is because of their close watch, diligent testing, and help from the community that we are able to have our race each year. With this grant funding, we know the town and the MLCA will be able to protect our lake and its water quality and allow our community to continue to create memories together with each stroke in the water, pedal on a bike, and foot on the pavement.

**Dana & Josh Huber
DASH Multisport**

Growing up as a child, Mt Lake was a retreat and summer spot for our family, from my grandparents, parents, aunts & uncles, to now my family and children. My children now build memories that will continue, all due to having been initiated by their great grandparents, wow, what a tradition! The lake environment is such a valuable community space. Having provided a service to this community as a NJ State Trooper, this location provides the community with an ability to encourage interaction, bring stability to children and afford neighbors with the tools needed, to maintain a safe and secure environment.

L. Gary Talijan

Again, Mountain Lake is a very special place for me, and one in which I will always consider home. As I reflect, it is just overwhelming for me to think that a place can have such an impact on who I have become. I am hopeful that we do everything we can to protect it for eternity so that future generations can gain as much from it as I have. Passion remains the key to managing this lovely and unique gift.

Emilia M. Thompson



Litter-Free Campaign in Full Swing

Thanks to the efforts of Rob and Alice Bechok and Lorraine Theil, the Mountain Lake Association's bulletin board next to the firehouse now features our *Find It, Bag It, Tag It* program.

The aim is to encourage those who walk around the lake to grab a bag, collect any litter they find, "tag it" by snapping a photo, and send it to us via our Facebook page (@MLCAWAG) or our email (MLCA.wag@gmail.com).

The effort is important for two reasons: we want our lake and surrounding community to be litter-free and attractive; and the photos received will support our eligibility for a grant from the Warren County Clean Communities Program.

Kudos to Marilyn Cruz who was the first to submit the two photos shown here, one from her walk on March 27, the other from her walk on April 5. Thank you Marilyn! But no thanks to those responsible for this sad disrespect.

Please do your part by never littering. And thank you for your willingness to grab a bag, collect any trash you find around the lake, snap a pic, and send it to us.



MT. LAKE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION 2022 MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

Mountain Lake Community Association
P.O. Box 275
Great Meadows, NJ 07838

Send form with check made out to MLCA.
 Or send form and use Paypal on our website.

Your \$30 annual membership donation helps to support the many activities and projects undertaken by the Lake Association. Those wishing to contribute more than the annual membership amount help to boost our effectiveness as an all-volunteer organization. A Lifetime Membership is available for a donation of \$1,000; this includes corporate funds matched in your name. MLCA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and all donations and memberships are tax deductible.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Street

Town

State

Zip

Email: _____

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I would like to receive future newsletters via email, recognizing it reduces costs for the Lake Association and is the green thing to do