

— APRIL 1, 2025



# FRIENDS OF THE LAKE 2025 SPRING NEWSLETTER



# Dear Friends of the Lake...

We are pleased to present our annual Spring newsletter summarizing upcoming events, membership statistics, ongoing projects and their status, and other lake-related news. Make sure to visit our website ([www.friendsofthelake.org](http://www.friendsofthelake.org)) for lots more information, including live water level and water quality data during the warmer months. Speaking of our website, we are looking to add more lake pictures and video to the site. If you have any content you'd like to contribute (still photos, drone footage, live webcams, etc.), please let us know at [info@friendsofthelake.org](mailto:info@friendsofthelake.org)!

Our newer board members have become increasingly involved in the many projects and much of the support required to continue our volunteer organization's success. Bridgewater board member Josh Francis, our new Chair, has transitioned to the shepherding and motivating duties required of the position with great competence.

We would summarize the 2024 season as one with continued improvement in our water quality, with few algae blooms and reduced debris events. Two weather events caused some downtime, reducing recreation time available while causing severe damage to many properties on the Lake. Yet we were incredibly lucky when compared to the catastrophic damage received by our neighbors on Lake's Zoar, Housatonic, and other points downstream. If you haven't already, you can subscribe to telephone alerts from FirstLight Power (sponsored by the LLA and FOTL) for all unscheduled lake-lowering events and other lake-related notifications by visiting this link: <http://www.lakelillinonahauthority.org/LakeAlertForm.html>

## Let's hope for smooth sailing this season!

Many thanks to Rebekah White, our Director of Water Quality who has worked so hard on so many issues; to the board members who contributed all the pieces of this newsletter, to the other stakeholders who look out for Lake Lillinonah including FirstLight Power Resources (FLP), the Lake Lillinonah Authority (LLA) and their Marine Patrol, and the six towns bordering our lake who support the LLA and our efforts to make the lake cleaner, safer and more enjoyable now and for the future.

And of course, our most sincere thanks to our amazing members! It is you who make this possible. Thank you! Let us know if you have any questions or suggestions.

On behalf of your executive board,

Scott Conant  
Newtown



## UPCOMING EVENTS:

Please mark your calendars and let us know if you can help in any way

### Save the Lake Day: Sunday, June 1

Due to past conflicts with youth sports, we are moving Save the Lake Day from our normal Saturday to Sunday, June 1, 2025, with the hope of getting more young folks and fresh faces involved! For any families with middle/high school kids, this is also a great opportunity to obtain community service hours, which we are happy to provide the documentation for.

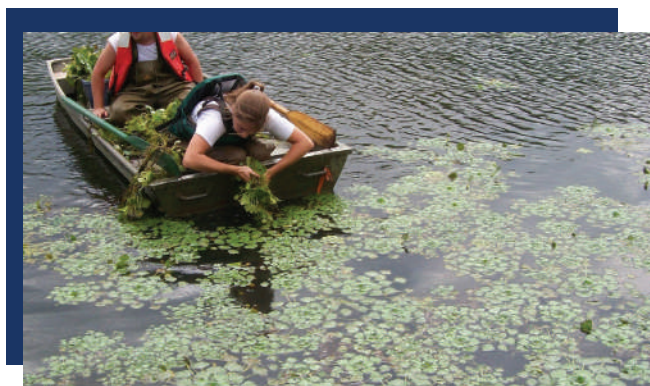
If you can attend with a pontoon boat, please let us know! All are welcome, but be careful about bringing very young ones; it gets very slippery out there and there's always debris that is not kid-friendly...

Please arrive at the Route 133 boat launch in Bridgewater at 8:30AM. We will provide gloves, garbage bags, bottled water, coffee, and doughnuts for the launch; and maybe some pizza (if you do a good job!) upon your return... Don't forget to wear shoes that don't mind getting wet, sunscreen, a hat, layers in case it's cold, and a smile. It is always amazing what we pull off our shores and always satisfying to make a direct impact on the health of our lake. It's also always fun to reconnect with the usual volunteers while meeting other members and neighbors.

A VERY special thanks to the Cisowski family for providing the dumpster – a critical component to the success of Save the Lake Day!

### Weed Pulling: 5/31 Housatonic Cove, 6/7 Lover's Leap shallows, 6/21 (if needed)

We need volunteers to help pull the invasive Water Chestnut to help prevent its' spread.  
Please email us at [info@friendsofthelake.org](mailto:info@friendsofthelake.org)  
if you are available and would like more information.



### Dine-Around: Saturday, June 28 4:30PM – the dessert house kicks us out

Details are still being developed. Prepare for a great evening of shuttling around our lake via Pontoon boats on a (hopefully) beautiful summer evening, visiting several lake-front homes while being treated to a succession of appetizers, entrees and finally, dessert! Let us know if you are interested in hosting or if you can provide a pontoon boat at [info@friendsofthelake.org](mailto:info@friendsofthelake.org).

Expect a separate email with details when available.

### Anniversary Party: Thursday, August 7, 6:00 – 8:00PM

Again, we are still in the process of nailing down the details, but our twenty-second anniversary bash will be a gathering of our members, special guests, with cocktails and hors-d'oeuvres, plus a summary of the summer's accomplishments.

## MEMBERSHIP:

First, a bit of business... To maintain the projects and services provided and keep the budget in the black, we find it necessary (for the first time in 22 years) to increase our family membership from \$100 to \$125 this year. If for any reason this is a challenge for you, please do not hesitate to reach out directly to us to discuss it further. We appreciate your continued support!

We have a record number of members! That is quite a compliment to the success of our organization and the importance of our mission! With close to 300 active members, we have representation in over 19 towns! We also warmly welcome our newest 23 members from the past year. We are so proud of this growing organization and the increasing strength our voice has in protecting Lake Lillinonah.

As spring starts to warm up, we will send friendly reminders to renew your 2025 membership (if you haven't already) and notices of our fun and interesting volunteer opportunities, events, and projects.

A friendly reminder to renew your 2025 membership! Most members have a recurring membership set up, so if you have any questions regarding your status or the data you have as your auto-renewal charge, please reach out directly to us and we can verify or change that information. If you wish to discontinue auto-renew, please let us know that as well. For those who would like to manually renew, or share this with a new neighbor who may be interested in joining, please visit this link:  
<https://friendsofthelake.org/members/>

## WOOD DEBRIS:

The wood debris issue on the lake was better last year in comparison to prior years. Fewer high water-level events occurred during the season resulting in less debris being washed downriver and floated off the shorelines. FirstLight Power has a program to remove wood debris and contributed to the reduction. Their removal program continues, and we encourage FLP to increase their efforts and introduce improved methods of removal. With that said, we thank FLP for a better-than-average season in 2024 and hope the reduction in high water-level events was intentional, with debris control in mind.

The Wood Debris Survey info and summaries from the past few years continue to show significant increases in the volume of wood debris on the lake's shoreline. In 2023, the survey indicated that the amount of debris more than doubled from the prior two years, due to the storm events of that summer. This, combined with high water-level events, created hazardous debris conditions on the lake on several occasions.

FOTL decided to skip our annual survey last year due to lower wood debris issues, volunteer workforce shortages, and timing – the severe August storm would have rendered the results less meaningful. FOTL will continue to survey wood debris, and will be reviewing alternate methods to provide future debris survey data as needed.

## **WATER QUALITY**

### **Kimberly Clark Permit Renewal**

We are collaborating with other stakeholders including the LLA, FirstLight Power, and Save the Sound to encourage the CT DEEP to act on KC's National Pollution Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) renewal permit. Unfortunately, this process is terribly slow-moving, but we have continued talks with FLP over the winter to keep this process moving forward.

FOTL collects water samples upstream and downstream of the Kimberly Clark effluent discharge pipe. These samples are used to monitor nutrient loading by the company until the permitting process is completed. Unfortunately, due to environmental factors (high river flows) our water sample testing above and below KC's discharge point has been unsuccessful to date but we are planning to continue our testing efforts this season.

### **Water Quality Monitoring**

Water quality monitoring is a major focus of Friends of the Lake (FOTL). We monitor water quality using different approaches. Our longest-running and most basic approach is our Citizen-Led Environmental Observatory (CLEO) dock monitoring. FOTL volunteers collect data three times weekly from their docks. Temperature, clarity, color and presence of algae are recorded. Rebekah White, our Director of Water Quality (DWQ) collects those data from five deep-water sites, plus air temperature; and at each meter, water temperature, dissolved oxygen, and conductivity are recorded. Our other approach involves the Global Lake Ecological Observatory Network (GLEON) buoy located just downstream of the Route 133 bridge. The data gathered from the buoy includes water temperature at each meter, dissolved oxygen at the surface and at 15 meters, pH at the surface, and pigment density to determine if cyanobacteria presence is changing. Data from all our monitoring is shared with the state and research institutions, which help determine the health of our lake.

Our CLEO program depends on volunteers to make observations from a dock on the lake three times a week from spring through fall. The data collected is analyzed by Dr. Jen Klug of Fairfield University and her students. This past year student Emma Kramer compiled over ten years of CLEO data and submitted a journal entry to Lakes and Reservoir Management, a peer reviewed scientific journal. Once the peer review is complete, we will share it with you. In 2024 we had four sites on the lake. In 2025 we would like to add additional sites, especially in Barkwood Cove, which was one of the original sites and had been monitored every season except 2024. This is a terrific opportunity for anyone from sixth grade on up to learn more about the lake and give back to your community. More than one person or family can monitor sites. Substitutes are also needed. Please let us know if you can volunteer or would like to learn more, at [info@friendsofthelake.org](mailto:info@friendsofthelake.org).

Our Director of Water Quality conducted additional testing at five deep-water sites around the lake. The sites are located near Poison Ivy Island, Barkwood Cove, the GLEON Buoy, the Dam, and the Shepaug branch. These sites correlate with most of our CLEO sites, except for the Dam. Some early and late season samples were collected at the buoy; during the season all sites are monitored weekly. The data from this testing was sent to the state and to Fairfield University. Additionally, the toxin samples we collected at these sites were analyzed by Western CT State University (WCSU) as part of their “CyanoMonitoring” program. In 2024, no samples returned an elevated cyanotoxin level. Our DWQ analyzed additional samples to identify the species of cyanobacteria. Our 2024 samples showed a diverse mix of species, like 2023. We hope to see a similar trend in 2025 since a good mix of species tends to correlate with relatively bloom-free and lower toxin-level seasons. Our nutrient levels remain consistent with previous years.

Our beloved GLEON research buoy received significant TLC in 2024. The sensor line that records the water temperature at every meter was replaced. The new line is less expensive to maintain than the old model. Additionally, we upgraded the logger component to allow us to utilize a less expensive cloud-based cellular system, also allowing us to use a mobile application rather than a desktop program. Alerts are sent within an hour of a connectivity problem, giving us quicker repair-response times. Other sensors were updated to yield the highest-quality data. In 2025 we are replacing the water level sensor, offering quicker fault alerts and an increase in measurement range (for drawdown events).

Make sure to check our website to see live water level and water quality data during the warm months.

## Integrated Water Planning Management (IWPM)

The states and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have created a long-term plan that identifies eutrophic lakes and rivers and develops a Water Quality Action Plan for those identified as such. In January of 2024, the state held a meeting and initiated a public comment period. Representatives of Friends of the Lake attended the meeting and submitted comments on behalf of Lake Lillinonah. Because of our water quality monitoring efforts, Lake Lillinonah was chosen to be studied. We should receive a watershed management plan, including a recommended Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) value, essentially a target of how much nutrient the lake can handle, above which exacerbate the growth of invasive plants, algae, and potentially harmful cyanobacteria. Our comments expressed our concern about nutrient loading, especially stormwater & non-point sources (sources that do not directly empty into our lake). Included in the comment was a photo of a lake-wide debris field following a major storm event.



## Invasive Species

Lake Lillinonah has four invasive species of concern. These include the newly discovered Hydrilla, plus Water Chestnut, Eurasian Milfoil, and Zebra Mussels. Friends of the Lake’s focus is to support monitoring the spread of these species while utilizing municipal, state, and private resources for their control. Efforts to remove Water Chestnut are having an encouraging impact.

Hydrilla was discovered in our lake in late 2023. FOTL hired a contractor to perform manual removal, since obtaining a permit to apply herbicides could not be obtained in a timely manner from the state. We needed an immediate solution. Monitoring by FirstLight Power in 2024 revealed some movement of the plant, but it still has only been found in the general area around the original sighting. We partnered with the Lillinonah Lake Authority (LLA), CT DEEP, and FirstLight Power to acquire funding that allowed herbicide treatments in 2024. The treatments were effective in areas lightly populated but were less effective in denser areas. The partnerships will continue in 2025, and additional treatments are planned thanks to funding from a grant to the CT DEEP and the LLA. FOTL will continue monitoring in conjunction with water sampling.

The water chestnut is an invasive plant most easily controlled by manual removal. FOTL started removal efforts in 2019. There have been significant reductions in the Still River and a good dent in the Housatonic Cove population as a result. Those areas are thought to be our 'feeder' populations. Our strongest partner in these efforts has been the Lake Lillinonah Authority, who hired a contractor to assist with the harvesting on both sides of the river near Lovers Leap. FOTL continues monitoring efforts to prevent the spread of new populations. FOTL will continue early season removal efforts on the scattered plants in the Still River and Bridgewater locations. We are also working with a boy scout from Southbury to organize a large pulling event for the Housatonic population in late May or early June as part of his Eagle Scout project. We plan to tap volunteer manpower from partnership organizations and the state to achieve significant removal efforts early in the season. We will be looking for volunteers for this event and details will be emailed when available.



Friends of the Lake has a monitoring program for zebra mussels. Monitoring devices are set up at the CLEO sites to assist in quantifying the population, which will be compared to prior years' results and with other water quality data we collect. Eurasian Milfoil is monitored through the invasive species monitoring program conducted by FirstLight Power.

## LAKE LILLINONAH AUTHORITY SUMMARY

The following is from the Lake Lillinonah Authority's website, within the November 2024 minutes. Please visit [lakelillinonahauthority.org](http://lakelillinonahauthority.org) for more minutes and other information.

"BOATING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE: Chair S. Young reported that the buoys, dock, boats, fuel tank have been removed. The generator will be moved from its existing location and requires maintenance. He also reported that there was a buoy with numerous bullet holes. Also, the upstream gorge buoy is caved in and cracked.

Marine Patrol Chief J. Puglisi read the summary of the LLA Marine Patrol Activities for the 2024 boating season as follows: 'The Lake Lillinonah Authority hires sworn off-duty police officers and non-sworn personnel for marine patrol. Three Lake Lillinonah Authority-furnished marine patrol boats were utilized throughout the season. Boat #2, 10" [sic] Boston Whaler had engine issues and was out of service for several weeks at the end of this season. There were 8 POST-certified officers, 8 Lake Patrol Officers (LPO) and 1 active assistant for 2024. A total of approximately 1605 man- hours were patrolled in 2024. Patrol had 453 vessel contacts which resulted in 275 verbal and written warnings; 268 inspections; and 53 requests to vacate due to trespass and equipment violations. Patrol had 64 documented boater assists and numerous debris removal. Assisted the following agencies: Brookfield Police Dive Team, Bridgewater Fire/Ambulance, CSP Troop A, Newtown Police, New Milford Fire, DEEP Encon Police, and New Milford Police several times throughout 2024 for assorted emergency service needs. We used approximately 2356 gallons of fuel during this boating season. We had a credit of 183.5 gallons at the end of the season.

FISH STOCKING COMMITTEE: C. Read stated at last month's meeting that Northern Pike is priced at \$24.00 per fish instead of \$20.00 per fish."

The following neighbors are members of the Lake Lillinonah Authority. Those with asterisks after their names are also Friends of the Lake Members. FOTL appreciates all that you do! Thank you!

New Milford: James Ginnetty, Mark Wurtman, one open position.

Brookfield: Second Vice Chair Vinny Young\*, Mauro Digirolamo\*, Kristin Lee

Newtown: First Vice Chair Scott Schifilliti\*, Richard Johnson, Chris Symes\*

Bridgewater: Chair Shannon Young\*, Treasurer Bernd Woerner\*, one open position

Roxbury: James Curren, Brad Waslenko, Charles Read

Southbury: John Munno, Shellie Lee, one open position

We hope you enjoyed our newsletter. Please contact us at [info@friendsofthelake.org](mailto:info@friendsofthelake.org) with any comments, questions, or topics you would like us to address in future newsletters. Have a wonderful, safe and fun summer on Lake Lillinonah – and we hope to see you out there!

Sincerely,

Executive Committee