



Photo by: Alan Connell



WINTER 2021

# SEBAGO IN DEPTH

Water, Land, Community

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# ENJOYING THE SPLENDOR OF THE SEASON

Winter Recreation Around Sebago Lake

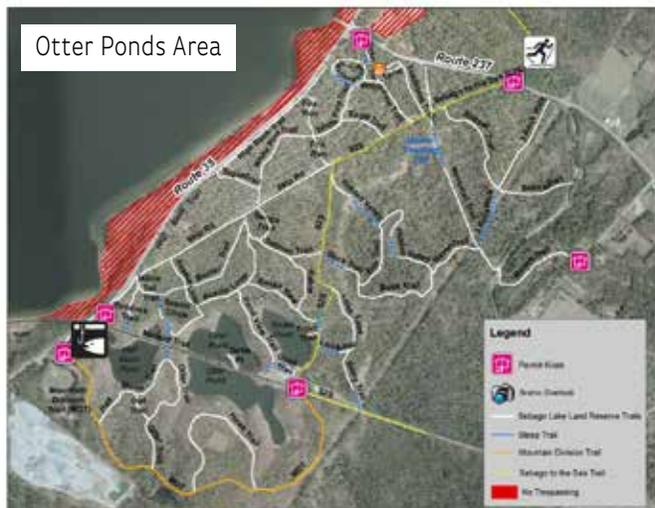


By Laurel Jackson

Winter around Sebago Lake is a slower, quieter time of year with many summer visitors back home and summer camps and residences closed for the season. This makes it an opportune time to get outside and explore new places, try new things, and relish the beauty that exists in nature. When the ground freezes and is blanketed with snow, it captures evidence of wildlife activity and also does a better job of keeping soil on the land. Soil poses the biggest threat to water quality in Maine lakes. Soil contains nutrients that feed plants, so erosion of soil into the lake can lead to more algae growth and lower water clarity over time. As a drinking water supply, the area right around the water intake pipes is restricted from public access but there are lots of other places on and around Sebago Lake where we all can enjoy the splendor and wonder of the winter season.

Near the southern end of Sebago Lake, the 1,700 acre, District-owned Sebago Lake Land Reserve (SLLR) provides ample opportunities for winter fun. Only a short drive from Portland, the wooded landscape of the SLLR is woven with trails and dotted with ponds. The trail system is used for snowmobiling, skiing, and snowshoeing. Snowmobiles frequently traverse the trails of the Otter Ponds section, leaving a smooth, wide, flat surface that is great for cross-country skiing. The Route 237 kiosk (see Otter Ponds Area map) is a convenient access point for cross-country skiing as well as snowmobiling. Follow the Sebago to the Sea trail and turn around at the Mountain Division Trail or use the various side trails to create your own looped route.

For a different perspective, at the northern end of Sebago Lake, the Sebago Lake State Park day-use area in Casco provides groomed cross-country skiing trails and excellent views from the northern shore of the lake.



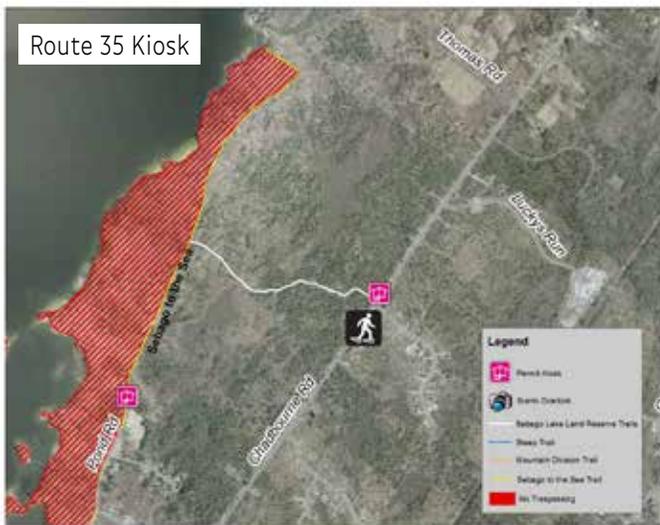


Exploring with snowshoes is best done on more remote, off-the-beaten path places and the SLLR has a few gems for that as well. While popular with visitors in the summer, the beach that marks the start of the Sebago to the Sea trail is much quieter in the winter.

You don't need lots of snow or trails to enjoy winter in Maine. There are plenty of outdoor activities that aren't dependent on fresh powder. Ice-fishing is a great way to get outside in the winter without the physical exertion of skiing and snowshoeing. For

beginner winter-adventurers, sourcing gear from family and friends is a great way to try new activities without the large expense of buying new equipment. Social media sites such as Facebook are another option for finding used gear like ice fishing traps, sleds, skates and skis. And while these activities can be great fun for the family, there is always the option of just going for a walk in the woods. The important thing is to get outside and experience Maine's natural beauty year-round and the Sebago Lake region has an abundance of beauty to offer.

*Laurel Jackson is a water resources specialist at the Portland Water District. She can be reached at [ljackson@pwd.org](mailto:ljackson@pwd.org)*



novice fishers looking for an accessible site, the Otter Ponds within the SLLR are a great spot. The three ponds can be accessed via various kiosks and the trail system. Here you can fish for a variety of stocked, native species including the iconic Brook Trout. Remember that anything left on the ice will end up in the water, so carry-in and carry-out all

equipment, trash and animal waste. Find the trailhead at the Route 35 kiosk. The route to the lake and back is about three miles and relatively flat, but is not commonly traversed by snowmobiles so may provide an opportunity for trail-breaking after a new snow. The first hours after a fresh snowfall is also a perfect time to observe and identify animal tracks. While nearly invisible in other seasons, the wildlife highways and hideaways of the woods are on display in winter. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife publishes an Animal Tracks of Maine poster that can help aid your identification efforts. The view from the shore across Sebago Lake and towards the Western Maine mountains is especially lovely just before dusk.

One benefit of cold temperatures and less snow is that it makes for prime ice-skating conditions. In 2019 and 2020, the early deep freeze provided magnificent ice skating conditions on Sebago Lake. Because of Sebago's clean and clear water, you could see through the ice to the bottom of the lake! Though Sebago rarely freezes all the way across the lake, Lower Bay and Jordan Bay are typically reliable for ice, but always check the ice thickness and weather conditions before venturing out! And as always, never leave human or animal waste on the ice since it will end up in the lake in the spring and lots of people drink that water.

## Staying Safe in the Snow!

Always check the weather forecast before going out.

Don't get caught in the dark! Give yourself plenty of time to get inside before sunset.

Be an onion: Layering clothing is the best way to regulate body temperature!



# PROFILE OF A SEBAGO PROTECTOR



## Mark Van Winkle

Camp Director,  
Camp Sebago Wohelo

*Wohelo Camps are traditional residential girls summer camps in Raymond which sit on a mile of Sebago Lake's shore with three coves, two beaches, and three islands. One of the two campuses, Sebago Wohelo, runs a seven-week youth program (ages 12 – 16) and then two weeks of family camp. Girls from all over the world attend with many following in their mother's footsteps. Camp activities include many land activities, but the most popular are those involving Sebago Lake, like swimming, sailing, and canoeing.*

### Q: WHAT IS YOUR FAMILY'S HISTORY AT SEBAGO LAKE?

A: It's a brother - sister team of myself and my sister, Heidi, who direct the camps now. We grew up at camp while our parents were directors. Our great-grandparents, Halsey Gulick and Charlotte Vetter Gulick, started Wohelo Camps in 1907 at its current location.

### Q: WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES OR STORIES OF SEBAGO LAKE?

A: My grandfather, Halsey Gulick, had many stories of the plentiful fish in Sebago. One of our favorite stories included the need to tip his canoe in the lake to scoop up a fish too big to get in any other way. He caught that on a Grey Ghost, the same fly design with which we caught a salmon right in front of camp this spring.

### Q. DO YOU THINK THE CAMPERS FEEL CONNECTED TO SEBAGO LAKE?

A: Come listen to the girls singing camp songs in the dining hall and you will hear the word "Sebago" sung more frequently than any word besides "Wohelo." They love the lake and will all of their lives. We have many alumnae who have cottages nearby due to their years at camp.

"If they could see me now,  
That hometown gang of mine,  
By the Sebago, and under lofty pines  
Wohelo sits on the shores of Sebago,  
Summers always seem to fly by much too fast"

### Q. WHAT MAKES SEBAGO LAKE SO SPECIAL?

A: Almost everything about it. A huge body of fresh clean water with a spectacular backdrop of mountains.

### Q. DO YOU HAVE CAMP ACTIVITIES THAT INSTILL STEWARDSHIP OF SEBAGO LAKE?

A: We incorporate the health of the lake into our daily lives. Besides just knowing we are swimming in, showering with, and drinking it [after disinfection] we really appreciate the clarity of the lake and being able to see so far to the bottom. The camp works to decrease water runoff (with a blueberry side benefit) or avoid any chemical use that might affect the lake, and we also take advantage of

educational opportunities offered by PWD or others. Many campers remember the trips on the pontoon boat with a remotely operated submarine for exploring the lake.



## LEA AND SEBAGO LAKE

The Lakes Environmental Association (LEA) has had a long and productive partnership with Portland Water District to help ensure Sebago Lake remains one of the cleanest waterbodies in the state. LEA's work includes review of large development projects in the Sebago Lake Watershed, milfoil control in Sebago and its tributaries, courtesy boat inspections at the State Park launch, water quality monitoring of 22 lakes and ponds that drain to Sebago, trainings for contractors and land use professionals, school and adult education programs, land preservation, and advancing lake research at the Maine Lake Science Center.

LEA is primarily membership funded. You can support their work by joining and becoming a member today. [www.mainelakes.org](http://www.mainelakes.org)

# WHAT'S MAKING WAVES: AROUND SEBAGO LAKE

## SEBAGO LAKE LAND RESERVE COVID-19 UPDATE

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, free access to the Sebago Lake Land Reserve (SLLR) required visitors to fill out a daily access permit at one of a dozen visitor kiosks. For the safety of SLLR users and District staff, we have suspended this permit requirement. We recently refurbished the kiosks in anticipation of requiring permits again in the coming months and will post easily visible signs when that happens, so please take a quick look at a kiosk when you visit. In the meantime, please follow the rules of the SLLR and enjoy the woods!

## RESOURCES FOR REMOTE LEARNING

District education staff have created remote learning resources for middle schoolers that can be used by teachers incorporating water into their curriculum. A five-part video series, "From Sebago Lake to Casco Bay," covers the District's essential services, treatment of water and wastewater, and actions students can take to protect water. Virtual editions of lessons taught in our WaterWays Program are also available, covering topics related to the water cycle, water pollution, watersheds, and stewardship. Learn more/access resources: [pwd.org/education-outreach](http://pwd.org/education-outreach)

## 2021 "IMAGES OF SEBAGO LAKE" CALENDARS AVAILABLE



Watershed residents, customers, and partners are invited to pick up a copy of our popular Images of Sebago Lake calendar. The calendar features pictures of Sebago Lake and its tributaries taken by amateur photographers. Pick up a copy from an outdoor receptacle at the Sebago Lake Protection Office, 1 White Rock Road, Standish.

Supplies are limited; one copy per person, please.

## CLEAN WATER ACT GRANT WILL REDUCE EROSION AROUND SEBAGO LAKE

The District, in partnership with Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District, was awarded a grant by the Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection to reduce erosion around Sebago Lake. Fixing erosion problems around the lake helps to protect Sebago Lake's outstanding water quality. The grant is the fourth of its kind that the District has received. Grant funds will be used to fix eroding sites at the Sebago Lake State Park, Camp O-AT-KA, and the Standish boat launch during 2021-2022.



## \$8M GRANT WILL PROTECT SEBAGO LAKE WATERSHED

In September, Sebago Clean Waters (SCW) reached a significant milestone in its effort to protect the Sebago Lake watershed when the coalition received an \$8 million U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service grant. As a lead partner in this effort, the District is proud to work with the eight other SCW organizations on this remarkable project. Funds will protect the Sebago Lake watershed through forest conservation and stewardship, invasive aquatic plant removal, stream improvement projects, and landowner outreach. Learn more: [sebagocleanwaters.org](http://sebagocleanwaters.org)



# THE VALUE OF CLEAR WATER

High Water Clarity Equates to Higher Property Values and Better Recreational Experiences



As lake scientists we often talk and write about the clarity of Sebago Lake in terms of how far down we can see a black and white disk that we lower into the lake... 9.1 meters (30 feet) on one day, 12.3 meters (40.5 feet) on a different day. That black and white disk is known as a Secchi disk, and we use it to measure precisely how far below the surface of the lake we can see every month. To us, it's a number and one of many scientific measurements of Sebago's overall water quality. But what is the value of that measurement to the folks that live around, recreate on, or drink the water on a daily basis? How does that measure of water clarity relate to property values? How does it affect recreation? How does it benefit the more than 200,000 people that drink it daily? Let's take a look...

*By Kirsten Ness*

Sebago Lake's water quality makes it unique, not only in the state of Maine, but across the nation. Very few lakes can support recreational activity, shorefront development, and serve as a public drinking water supply. Sebago's exceptional clarity makes it easier to treat compared to other water sources in the state and the nation. Unlike most other public water supplies, the District does not have to filter the water as part of the treatment process because the water is already so clean. This saves the people in 11 communities the expense of a filtration plant, which would cost around \$150 million just to build.

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Property values are higher on lakes that are more clear.

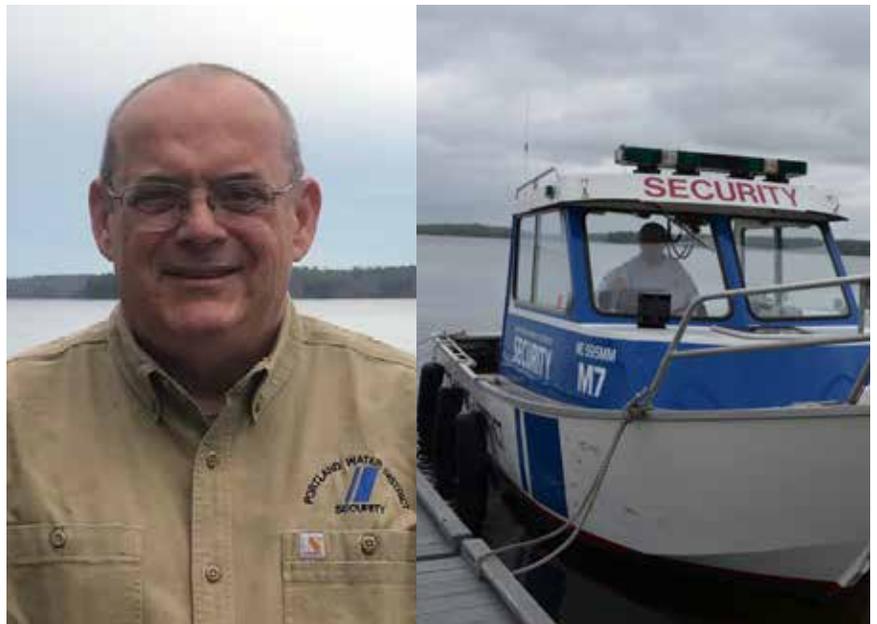
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Now you might be thinking, “how does that relate to me? I don’t drink the water.” You may not, but if you use or live beside Sebago Lake, you benefit in a different way. If you enjoy the lake for recreation, you probably appreciate the clarity of the water for swimming, boating, or fishing. If you live around Sebago, you directly benefit from the clarity of the lake. Research by the University of Maine and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection has shown that property values are higher on lakes that are more clear, and Sebago is one of the clearest lakes in Maine. We can usually see that disk more than 30 feet below the surface of the water, deeper than many houses around the lake are tall! For comparison, you would only be able to see that disk about 15 feet below the surface of an “average” Maine lake. And the very same home would be worth less on that less clear lake.

But how can we all help keep Sebago Lake as clear as it is today? If you recreate on or live around the lake, please respect it and help keep pollution out of it so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come. If you drink it, please consider supporting one of the many organizations that help to protect the forested land that drains to it.

*Kirsten Ness is a water resources specialist at the Portland Water District. She can be reached at [kness@pwd.org](mailto:kness@pwd.org)*



## DISTRICT STAFF } PROFILE

**Rod Beaulieu**  
Chief of Security Operations,  
Portland Water District

With 40 years of law enforcement experience that culminated in the position of Chief of Police, Rod has the background and experience to manage security operations for the District. Two of his responsibilities include managing the Sebago Lake Land Reserve (SLLR) and the security of the water intakes in the Lower Bay of Sebago Lake.

The SLLR is comprised of about 1,700 acres of District-owned land around Lower Bay. While the primary goal for the land is to protect lake water quality, it is also open to the public for low impact recreation. Use of the land requires a permit which can be acquired at any of twelve self-service kiosks. (Note: at this writing the permit requirement is temporarily suspended due to the pandemic.)

The District’s water intakes are located in Lower Bay and are surrounded by two protection zones that provide a measure of safety and security to the public water supply. The area immediately around the intakes is protected by an inner 3,000-foot, No Trespassing Zone and, outside that, a larger 2-mile, No Bodily Contact Zone. This larger zone allows boats and ice fishing but no bodily contact with the water is permitted. This is to prevent potentially dangerous bacteria and viruses from entering the water supply. Both zones are delineated with buoys, and the No Trespassing Zone is marked with flags in the winter.

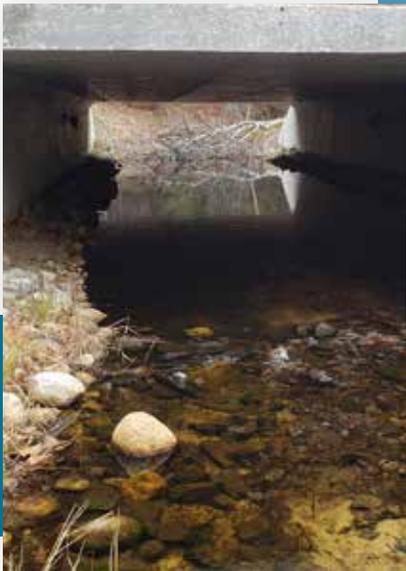
“A big part of what I do is talking with visitors and communicating the importance of adhering to the state laws as they pertain to the Lower Bay protection zones. The key to effectiveness is doing it in a non-confrontational and helpful way. I also share information about the lake, water quality protection strategies, and the District’s environmental programs with folks who may be interested. From doing routine patrols to tending to permitting kiosks, this takes a lot of my time and my employees’ time. During the busy season, I hire, train, schedule, and supervise nine temporary employees. These employees are the ones you see captaining the District’s patrol boat and staffing the boat launch at the Sebago Lake Station Landing.”



# WAT-ER YOU LOOKING AT IN OUR WATERSHED?!

For the curious of mind: kids, families, adults with a young soul

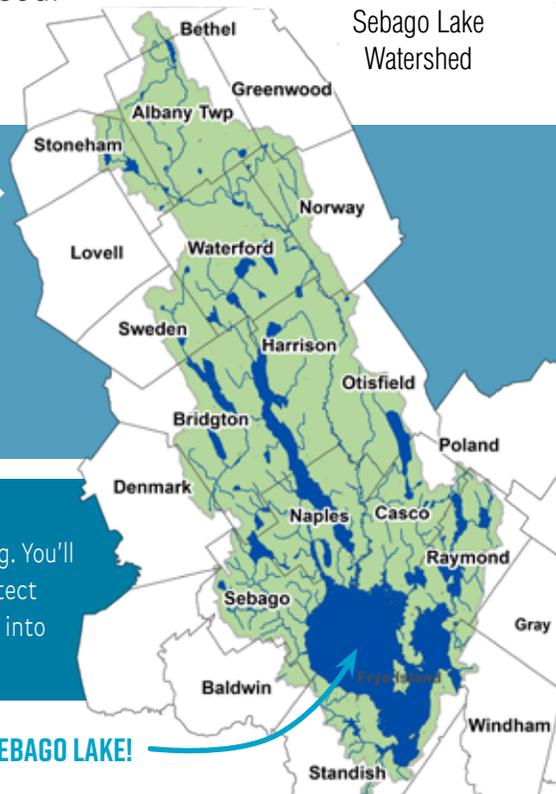
Each edition, we'll share a photo of something in the Sebago Lake Watershed that helps protect the water in Sebago Lake and all of the connecting streams, rivers, and ponds.



**WHAT'S A WATERSHED?** *A watershed is an area of land over which all water flows into a common body of water. The Sebago Lake Watershed includes parts or all of 20 towns and many other bodies of water! When it rains within this area of land, the water flows downhill either soaking into the ground or collecting in a nearby stream or river. Eventually, the water will flow to and collect in Sebago Lake.*

## WHAT COULD THIS BE?!

Submit your guesses by emailing [sebagolake@pwd.org](mailto:sebagolake@pwd.org). You'll learn what is in this photograph and how it helps protect Sebago Lake. By submitting a guess, you'll be entered into a drawing to win a stainless steel water bottle.



THAT'S SEBAGO LAKE!



## CONNECT WITH US

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Learn about events we and our partners host around the lake and throughout the watershed by joining our email list. Send an email to [sebagolake@pwd.org](mailto:sebagolake@pwd.org)

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