

# Friends of Lake Winnecook

This special edition of the newsletter is focused on a significant public policy issue as it relates to our lake – the restoration of alewives to the Kennebec River basin. Unity Pond has provided spawning habitat for alewives that have been delivered by truck since 1985 and has contributed to the successful restoration of an alewife run in the Sebasticook and Kennebec Rivers. Approximately 15,000 adult alewives captured below the Fort Halifax Dam in Winslow are deposited in the pond during May and June. This number represents a population of 6 adults per acre. The alewives spawn and most leave the lake during the late summer to spend the winter at sea.

At each of the last two annual meetings, the number of alewives in the lake and their potential impact on nutrient and species balance has been raised. Professor Dave Potter provided a stimulating presentation at the August 2003 meeting, suggesting that the large number of juvenile alewives in the lake are likely grazing zooplankton levels down. Zooplankton are the animals that feed on phytoplankton, including the blue-green algae that we all agree is overabundant in the lake.

Given the degree of interest in this subject, the board and several active Association members organized a well attended forum in October to learn more about the alewife restoration program and its potential impacts on lake species diversity and water quality. FOLW, by asking some questions, raised quite a stir among the agencies and interest groups that are engaged in the alewife restoration effort. They were concerned that FOLW might be part of a conspiracy to stop the restoration effort. We assured them that this is not the case, but that we were concerned about potential impacts of the stocking program on the lake.

About 60 people attended the forum, though not as many lakeside residents as we would have hoped. Staff from the Departments of Marine Resources (DMR), Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IF&W) and Environmental Protection (DEP), as well as of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), joined representatives of Maine Rivers, Trout Unlimited, Professor Potter and local professional wildlife biologists in offering brief perspectives on the alewives' impact on Unity Pond. The forum was informative but did not allow for in-depth examination of the subject. It became clear that there is contradictory scientific evidence about virtually everything!

The board has been enriched by the information provided by the resource agencies and wanted to share this with all FOLW members. We appreciate that the USFWS has provided the enclosed color prints of three very informative briefings regarding alewives and Lake Winnecook. We urge you to read them. Also enclosed are more anecdotal discussions from area residents regarding observations over the years and perceived correlation with the alewife stocking program.

Among the data that are not refuted is the fact that the vast majority of phosphorus entering the lake is from human land uses and inadequate buffers in the watershed – not from alewives. FOLW is pleased to be working with the Waldo County Soil & Water Conservation District and Cooperative Extension Service to make what we hope will be aggressive improvements to decrease the phosphorus entering the lake.

**However, at the same time, the board has reviewed the arguments and been persuaded that after 14 years of direct alewife stocking, it is in the lake's best interest to take a break. We would like to petition the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to turn down any application from the Department of Marine Resources to direct stock alewives in Unity Pond for the next several years.** We believe that the alewife numbers are at satisfactory levels to sustain a natural run from above the Benton Falls Dam, the last man-made impediment to their natural run to the lake and that fish would be more likely to return to the proper lake in which they were spawned.

We do not believe that enough is known about the current carrying capacity of this lake (as opposed to others) and that monitoring of the size and number of alewives, other fish and zooplankton should be done over a 10-15 year period to better understand what may be occurring. We suspect that the average size of fish will increase, zooplankton numbers will increase and water clarity may improve.

Taking a position to oppose alewife stocking is a big step for FOLW and one that the board does not take lightly. You will read that there is evidence to indicate that the alewife restoration program is causing little or no damage to the lake ecosystem. The pro-stocking position is far better armed with formal studies than is the anti-stocking position; however, local observations and intuition have carried the day. We believe Unity Pond can host a more natural alewife population and strike a better balance with zooplankton populations.

**But before taking this step, we want to hear from you, the members – yes or no? Please fill out the form in this newsletter and return it to FOLW so that it arrives by March 1<sup>st</sup>.** The board will meet on March 2<sup>nd</sup> (7PM, Crosstrax Catering – feel free to attend) to review the vote and all comments, and make a decision.

Yours for a healthy Lake Winnecook,  
The FOLW Board

[www.unitymaine.org/orgs/folw](http://www.unitymaine.org/orgs/folw)

email: [folw@unitymaine.org](mailto:folw@unitymaine.org)

# Friends of Lake Winnecook Membership Form

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Permanent home address**

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**Seasonal lake address**

Street \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

Number of members joining \_\_\_\_\_ x \$10.00 per member = \$\_\_\_\_\_.  
(under 18 years no membership fee.)

Additional donations encouraged:

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General donation         | <input type="checkbox"/> Eagles                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other lake associations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loon preservation        | <input type="checkbox"/> Publications           | <input type="checkbox"/> Research or monitoring  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth and education      | <input type="checkbox"/> Acquisitions           | <input type="checkbox"/> College Work Study      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boating/navigation/buoys | <input type="checkbox"/> any other preferences? |  |

- ? **I SUPPORT** the recommendation of the Friends of Lake Winnecook Board to petition the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to deny any permit to stock alewives directly into Lake Winnecook/Unity Pond in 2004. *Note: A ban on direct stocking would not prevent alewives from being transported over the Fort Halifax and Benton Falls dams and finding their own way to the lake.*
- ? **I DO NOT SUPPORT** the recommendation of the Friends of Lake Winnecook Board to petition the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to deny any permit to stock alewives directly into Lake Winnecook/Unity Pond in 2004.

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
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# Friends of Lake Winnecook

## 2004 Winter Newsletter

**Should the FOLW Board petition the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to turn down any application from the Department of Marine Resources to direct stock alewives in Unity Pond for the next several years?**

**Friends of Lake Winnecook  
P. O. Box 73  
Unity ME 04988**

