

**Bridgewater Updates
Board of Selectmen
September 2022**

Summer wains: and tan lines fade. Fall awaits

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Finances:

As most are aware, the Town is not isolated from the financial problems of the country. Higher prices, supply and labor shortages coupled with energy cost surges has increased the cost of operations. Nonetheless, we are still in good shape relative to the municipal budget. The Cooperative School District and the apportionment problem is at a standstill. It could be very costly for Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton. For background information, please click on the following links. It is important that you fully understand this issue because any change could have a dramatic impact on the overall tax rate.

Winter News: <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/1fe88111-8580-4a2e-bfae-899271219bdd/downloads/Winter%202022%20Vol.1.pdf?ver=1641475720823>

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Spring News: <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/1fe88111-8580-4a2e-bfae-899271219bdd/downloads/Spring%202022%20Vol.1.pdf?ver=1657046164450>

Apportionment/School Issue: Newfound School District is comprised of 7 Towns

Currently, the net cost of operating the School District is divided by the total number of students to obtain the cost per student. That is referred to as the **Average Daily Membership** or ADM. That cost per student is currently about \$20,000 per student for their education. **Each member town pays that amount times the number of students from that town.** If one town has more students than another, that town, obviously, will have higher educational costs. That's the crux of the problem. **Currently, every Town pays the same cost per student for the same education seat.**

There is another method of apportioning costs throughout a school district. It is to put less weight on the number of children a town sends to the school district and use the valuation of all real estate values in each town. It's called **Equalized Valuation**. A town with lots of children would favor that valuation approach especially when they have lower property values. The net effect of moving to a "combo" formula (50% ADM & 50% Valuation) causes another disproportionality. One of our small towns in the district could pay \$30,000 a seat while another larger town pays \$13,000. This disproportionality has been discussed and dismissed outright by the smaller towns in the District as the larger towns seek to lower their own property taxes at our expense. Little or no consideration is given for the quality of District's education. In effect, our towns would subsidize another town's educational costs.

If you adopt **equalized valuation** as a way to deal with apportionment, it causes a significant imbalance between communities. This issue of adequate education and funding disparities between towns is a state legislature issue and should not and cannot be resolved at the local level. It also penalizes towns like ours who are frugal with the taxpayer's money and better control spending on the municipal side of our budgets. (Please realize that some consider this "combo

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approach” as a fair way to deal with this issue especially if you’re on the receiving end.)

The current apportionment formula is, in our opinion, extremely fair. Each town pays the same price for the same service. Moving to a valuation-based approach ignores the reality of ability to pay your taxes. The assessed value of your house has little bearing on one’s ability to pay taxes. Your home is not an ATM machine. Bridgewater and Hebron are considered “rich” communities because of its perceived low tax rates and higher property values. Actually, Bristol’s total valuation base is about \$151,821,225 higher in equalized value than Bridgewater and about \$372,624,951 more than Hebron! Bristol compared to Groton is \$580,297,601 greater. However, Bristol has about 320 students to 85 from Bridgewater 48 from Hebron and about 20 from Groton. Moreover, the median family income of Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton is lower and our poverty rates higher than most of the other towns in the District.

Categorizing our towns as “rich” does a disservice to our hard-working lower/middle income citizens and those on fixed incomes. Some modest proposed changes in the apportionment formula would require Groton to raise an additional \$ 400,000/year for educational expense. The word “fair” is mentioned by those in favor of that change. (Divide that number by 20 students and re-think the word “fair”)

Please read the above links to get a better understanding of the issue, **“IT’S A REALLY BIG DEAL” *You can help. Tell your friends provide their email address to the Town Clerk, when they register their car to stay informed.***

We will contact you, to let you know how your vote will count, at a later date.

Strategies:

We have options if the apportionment formula is changed:

1. Withdraw from the Cooperative School District. We considered withdrawal in 2015. We stopped the process because of the negative impact it

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would have on the Town of Groton. Also, the School District threatened to withdraw children from Alexandria and Bristol attending the Bridgewater –

Hebron school. With so few remaining at the school, it was deemed unwise to continue the process. That negative, as pushed by the School District, has changed and is, now, a viable option. Hill, NH formed a separate school district after withdrawing from the Franklin School District. They tuition into the Newfound Cooperative School District for grades 7-12. They are a model for such a withdrawal.

2. School Lease Contract. Any change in the apportionment formula may threaten the continuation of the Village District School Building. Our contract/agreement that rents the building to the school district has a clause that would terminate the \$1.00 per year lease and voids the entire agreement if the funding formula is changed. Such an event occurrence will threaten teacher and staff jobs across the district. (Union “bumping” clause would, most likely, cause “last in – first out” issues. Disruption of student learning and community use of the building will be impacted. The Superintendent would be responsible for minimizing such an impact.

Let's be clear. The Cooperative School Board has signed 3 consecutive contracts in the last 22 years with the Village District. Those contracts are a mirror image of the original document. Bridgewater and Hebron have spent **millions of dollars** beyond our normal obligations to assist the School District and, ultimately the children. In addition, Bridgewater and Hebron students are a minority among those who attend the school. We have always welcomed children from the other towns to attend. **The consequences of voiding the contract rests squarely in the lap of the School Board.**

Other Considerations: The Village District School's educational performance is outstanding. It is ranked in the top 83 percentile of the State for Math and English. New Hampton and Danbury also are performing well. (Bristol Elementary School is unknown at this time.) Our teachers and staff are exemplary and parent involvement is exceptional.

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The principle cause for the 2015 withdrawal consideration was Middle School performance. It currently performs at the 36 percentile range and the High School at the 56 percentile. The Middle School has underperformed at that level for decades. Parents in Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton, at that time, wanted K-8 at the Bridgewater-Hebron School so we could better prepare our children for High School. They overwhelmingly wished to establish our own K-8 school and tuition our High School students to Plymouth or Bristol.

Why would we - Bridgewater, Hebron or Groton -- be willing to stay with a District that underperforms and our neighboring towns increasingly look at us unfairly as a “cash cow” when we currently pay more than our fair share to support the District? Cooperative School Districts are under fire at the State level for these same reasons and more small towns are reassessing the concept. District withdrawals and Charter schools are on the rise across the state as a result.

We will always advocate for what’s best for children and work cooperatively with the School District as a public entity on equal footing. But we will not be forced into arrangements that negatively impact our ability to support quality education for our children by political maneuvering of the larger towns within the district.

THIS IS A REALLY BIG DEAL.

Moving On.....

Public Safety:

We have a new Police Chief. George Huckins of New Hampton has been appointed as our new Chief of Police. He was formally the Police Chief in New Hampton for many years. He has a great background with 23 years in community policing and worked for a few years with our department. George Hill decided to retire from police work after 31 years as a police officer. We thank him for his efforts on our behalf.

Ambulance:

The new ambulance has been delayed. The delivered chassis was the wrong GVW and was rejected by the Board of Selectman. Some other items were also not available. The new 2023 chassis is on order from Ford and will meet the specifications as originally requested. Funding for this vehicle was 85% funded by

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private and federal grants. With a median age of the community at 59 years young, it keeps the crew very busy. If you're interested in assisting in the area of EMS staff, contact Jake at 603-744-6047.

Broadband Initiative:

Contrary to some rumors, we are not in opposition to any technological proposals that have been discussed in other communities. From the little we know, the federal funding ideas put forth thus far sound similar to the REA funding. The Rural Electrification Act of 1936, enacted on May 20, 1936, provided federal loans for the installation of electrical distribution systems to serve isolated rural areas of the United States.

Bridgewater is already 98% cabled. To our knowledge, during the height of the pandemic, no students were disadvantaged. Remote access was achievable. We are not contending that the current ISP provider is perfect. ... We are very open to different approaches to internet services.

What we currently know: a group of towns and Grafton County are currently proposing to cable all the Grafton County town halls together on a new fiber cable that would run throughout the County. They are lobbying for a 30 million dollar federal grant for that project. It appears each community on the second phase will be on their own to spread out from the center to install an additional cable throughout the Town. There are lots of questions about this matter.

One matter is certain – it will not be free!! Internet services are not regulated as a public utility. They are private entities. In a recent local news article, federal funding for this proposed project is in doubt. We will update you as this progresses.

Refuse District:

Solid waste management is complex, It is highly regulated and has become a multidisciplinary problem involving economic and technical aspects, normative constraints (i.e.,” pollution is bad, recycling is good”) about recycling and sustainable development issues. The closing of landfills and NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) coupled with other importing countries (China) rejecting other exporting countries waste (USA, Canada etc.) (for good reason) has driven

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various recycling and incineration processes. It also makes the recycling process problematic. With few material markets, coupled with a highly regulated industry, there are fewer outlets for recycled products. This drives the price for recycled products down. Single stream recycling (which we rejected years ago) has proven to be an economic bust, which further complicates the industry.

Solid waste management is a high priority issue for everyone. Increasing solid waste generation rates, disposal cost, environmental, and health concerns, limited landfill space, legislative changes, political climate, and social attitudes have significant impacts on waste management efforts. We are no exception.

One way to help would be the elimination/reduction of single use plastic bags. Life would go on if paper bags were reintroduced. US plastics generated in **1960 – 390,000 tons. 2018 – 26,850,000 tons.** Percent recycled = <10%

Nonetheless, we have completed the closing of the old ash landfill, closed an old C&D landfill, and created a groundwater management plan, a solid waste plan, various monitoring plans and various mandatory reporting systems. This is in addition to the processing of incoming material. Most of this work was done in-house with minimal engineering support.

NH Solid Waste Planning: Very lacking: For more, click on the following article:

<https://www.libertymedianh.org/groups-raise-objections-to-solid-waste-plan/>

DO YOU REALLY RECYCLE THE MATERIALS WE DROP OFF?? ABSOLUTELY!!

Anything that can be diverted from a landfill is sold or otherwise handled. That said, some products have no market. Currently, the cost of transport is far greater than the tipping fee. (A tipping fee is paid by anyone who disposes waste in a landfill that is based on the weight of waste per ton.) It is a far less expensive method than landfilling or other methods.

Last year, we purchased a pre-crusher compactor that increased the number of tons/load shipped from our facility. That reduced the number or trips of shipping non-recyclables – non incinerated materials. For years, we shipped 4-6 ton per trip. With this new equipment, we ship 14-16 tons per trip. It makes us more productive.

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Facility stickers:

It is likely that next summer, we will initiate a “rental pass fee” for those leasing their properties on a short-term basis for a few days, a week, two weeks, a month, etc. This is not meant for an annual lease that someone is considered a resident in the town. By observation, renters bring more trash to our facility than property owners. Currently, we have two types of facility pass/stickers. One for all property owners in Bridgewater @ no charge, and a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly rental sticker for those who rent their homes for a short-term basis. Currently, no charge for that group. In the future, all property owners will continue to receive a free year facility pass including those who rent on a short-term basis. The rental property owner will be required to submit a request to the town for the rental weeks and pay the rental pass fee for each rental. All Bridgewater property owners must affix the yearly pass to their auto. All rental passes will have a QR code that can be scanned to identify the renter, the property and the rental period. That pass will expire at the end of the rental. As is the current policy, all who use the facility must follow the separation rules. This proposed policy is reasonable for all involved.

In closing, the staff appreciates your efforts in separating your materials and the support you give to environmental change. It is no longer your “grandfather’s dump”

Sahegenet Falls Recreation Area

Sahegenet Falls Recreation Area is a day picnic site and swimming site in Bridgewater, New Hampshire. Sahegenet Falls Recreation Area is situated nearby to Webster Pond. It has 12.2 acres of wooded area and about 2000 feet along the Pemigewasst River. It is a “carry in and carry out” area. There is limited parking and, for the most part, it’s a great place to cool off in the summer.

We have had an increased number of concerns from town residents concerning overuse especially from those who are using the park and, apparently, are not property owners in town. Additionally, we have had to evict a few campers who have frequented the site.

While this has been an infrequent problem, it seems to be growing. We are considering automobile stickers and other identifiers to remediate this problem.

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We will start with improved signage at the site and move towards passes if necessary. More on that issues at a later date.



If you're a recent arrival to town, click on the following:

Directions: Bridgewater

<https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Bridgewater,+New+Hampshire/Sahegenet+Falls+Recreation+Area,+1649+River+Rd,+Plymouth,+NH+03264/@43.6523563,-71.7692975,12z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x4cb35a8532acf983:0x18f07c2299c05d06!2m2!1d-71.7364678!2d43.6384067!1m5!1m1!1s0x4cb3452de5b6653d:0x269f9be79c961c08c!2m2!1d-71.6508831!2d43.6836676!3e0>

Directions: Plymouth

<https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Plymouth,+New+Hampshire+03264/1649+River+Rd,+Plymouth,+NH+03264/@43.7198217,-71.7041519,13z/data=!4m13!4m12!1m5!1m1!1s0x4cb35c01ce3a53f7:0xb433d8b13843c39d!2m2!1d-71.6881528!2d43.7570196!1m5!1m1!1s0x4cb3453276c5c1a3:0xfb266873793d5e4a!2m2!1d-71.6521302!2d43.6835716>

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Highway Department.

Often, we hear about runoff of silt from the unpaved portions of our roads which might end up in the lake and/or the Pemi River. While this might be a slight exaggeration of that issue, we do a good job stabilizing the roads. We only grade when there is moisture in the soil. Periodically, after grading and crowning of the roads, we rent a large vibratory roller to compact the surface. We use a solution of diluted calcium chloride to reduce dust and further compact the surface. We manage the ditch lines and maintain water turnouts to slow runoff and reduce erosion. One suggestion was to put large “rip-rap” in the steep ditch line sections of our roads. Unfortunately, that quickly fills with “fines” between the rocks and eventually the rip-rap is unproductive. It then becomes impractical to re-ditch with a grader because of the covered stone in the ditch line. It is better, in most cases, to have more turnouts to control the velocity of the water. We also use mini bales of bound straw to further control erosion.

Finally, we had proposed, at the Spring Town Meeting, \$500,000 to pave/overlay existing paved roads. At that meeting, the Selectman recommended the Town Meeting Members turn down that warrant article due the rapid rise of the price of tar/oil since the preparation of the town budget. We will review the prices to determine how to proceed in the spring.

Town House and Old Home Day: The Roof

What is Old Home Day? Old Home Day gives residents, crafters, artisans, businesses and town organizations a chance to spruce up the community and show it off to visitors. Each town in NH may hold their celebration a little differently but the message remains the same: **welcome home**. It is celebrated in town on the 3rd Saturday in August. Click on the following for the origins of the event:

<https://newengland.com/today/living/new-england-history/old-home-day-history/>

Old Home Day has been consecutively celebrated for over 100 years. The town was founded in 1788!!

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The Town House building was constructed in 1804.



Historic Pictures and Calendar

There is a Bridgewater historical calendar that was compiled by the Historical Society of this Town. It was introduced at this year's Old Home Day. It will be available for sale \$10 each, at the State Primary voting on 9/13/22. Get your check (written to the 'Bridgewater Historical Society'). Or mail to **Judy Faran, 42 Bridgewater Hill Road, Bridgewater, NH 03264**. They are terrific with each image suitable for framing. Did you know that Bridgewater had a train station years ago?

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The current front porch was added in 1915.

The building stood well until the winter of 1969 when snow loads collapsed the roof. After the repair, the building stood “as is” until recent times. The building’s stone foundation was failing and the building was raised and a modern concrete foundation was installed. Granite facing was added to extenuate the historic

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character of the building to the community. Rotted floor timbers were repaired as well. Additional upgrades were added, such as new electrical system with interior lighting converted to LED in the Last 10 years. Painting and plaster repairs as well. The building is in good repair as well. However ---

FUND RAISING: ROOF

The existing Town House roof needs some help. The roof need a new shingles and requires some attention to the underlying support boards. Since the 1969 roof repairs, the roof has developed some sagging in between the existing support timbers. The initial estimate is. \$55,000. We have already received \$22,000 in pledges to offset the costs.

We realize this is a challenging time to ask for voluntary funding to assist in this matter. However, a large snow load accumulating between the rafters might cause a repeat of 1969. We are proposing a standing seam metal roof on top of leveling plywood. This material will shed snow from the roof and has a 30 year warranty. In addition, the old chimney will be removed as well. If you can help, send your donation to: **Town of Bridgewater”, 297 Mayhew Tpke. Bridgewater, NH 03222. Please note in memo field – “Townhouse Roof.”**

If more funds are raised, it will be escrowed to a Town House Maintenance Fund. It will be included in our annual audit and reported in the annual town report.

“Why not use solely public funds?” Because any potential tax increase may impact those who can ill afford the added cost. Also, with the school issue and Grafton County expenses to the town, it’s very difficult to project this year’s tax rate. If you can help, thanks.

Newfound Lake and the Pemigewasset River

How Bridgewater has Managed Growth and Environmental issues Over the Years.

- Passed local land use controls. Over the years, the stakeholders have adopted many updates and modifications in keeping with the Master Plan 1985 and future updates
- Conversion ordinance - Seasonal to year round use requires a septic review and update. In addition, if you enlarge the dwelling, the septic has to meet the current

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DES standard. Our assessing data lists the type of use and age of the systems and use of the property.

- Steep slope management. Slopes greater than 15% have to be deducted from any subdivision proposal. Wet areas and road frontage also are removed. 99% of those areas require a 5 acre minimum lot size

- 2 and 5 acre subdivision requirement depending on the zone. Most of Bridgewater is in the 5 acre zone.

- **Pemi River shoreline protection. Protecting this area is as important as the Lake.**

- Restriction on waterfront rights of way. (Funneling) on Pemi and Newfound.

- Wetland evaluation study – entire Town. Maps wet areas in town. Natural resources inventory.

- Building permit system. Septic review is required if you're expanding septic loading. In areas bordering the Lake, most old systems have been moved/upgraded away from the lake by the use of pumping systems. Cottage colonies that were converted to condos had major engineering requirements for water and septic upgrades before approval.

- Redevelopment of property or change in use – includes septic/water review. Septic loading on small lots, setback improvements etc.

- Lot Merger. In densely populated areas, we encourage lot mergers. Usually lowers tax bill to owner.

- Master Plan focuses on slow growth, environmental and natural resource protection.

- Other

- Highway culvert and water diversion management
- Encouraging consulting forester to boost best management practices in logging
- Solid waste management program – HB Refuse District. Recycling, reuse, incineration and landfill programs.

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Coupled with local and state regulations, we have been able to manage these issues improving property owners' equity in their property.

“Pemi River Shoreline Protection Plan”.

Years ago, The Town modified its zoning regulations to create the “Pemi River Shoreline Protection Plan” At that time, mostly lakes were designated protection areas by the Department of Environmental Services (DES). That changed some years ago after our enactment. The Pemi is now included as a DES designated river. In short. Removing vegetation in the first 50’ to 250’ is regulated. Many of the river side slopes are very steep and is sandy. Easy to create erosion and difficult to contain. Some areas along the Pemi are in a flood zone. **A flood zone is a geographic area that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has defined according to flood risk.**

One note of interest. The town line is, effectively, the center line of the river. If you border the river, your property line is that point as well. That is the same for Newfound Lake, your property line most likely extends out into the lake. There have been a number of law suits relative to that matter. The river was raised by the creation of the Ayers Island Hydropower Dam in Bristol and Ashland. The Lake was raised in 1860. (See below) The land was not taken, just flowage rights granted to a particular elevation.

Please see the following links for guidance.

<https://www.des.nh.gov/land/waterfront-development>

<https://www.des.nh.gov/protected-shoreland-faq#faq30931>

<https://www.des.nh.gov/water/wetlands>

Newfound Lake and Lake Level

Background:

Drone Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ucq6KSFqzuU>

Newfound Lake Region Association Web Data:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sEBViO2Z3SvO8-mKD9hsJ6le4HlvQXF3/view>

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<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HKXmdlNQq5k7ZC-ARjSGoZbnwU3ltKjB/view>

https://www.hebronnh.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3256/f/uploads/lake_level_management_faqs.pdf

In 1860, Newfound Lake was dammed and raised by 7 feet. The water rights of the lake and other NH lakes along with the Pemi were used for downstream water power for textile, paper and flour mills, tanneries, and even foundries. The lakes were also a reserve during the fall of the year for industries in Manchester NH, Lowell and Lawrence Mass.

Over the years, the water rights were deeded to various entities. Newfound water rights were deeded to The State of NH around 1980. From 1860 to 1980, the lake level was full by May 30th and drawdown was a very low level by late fall. It was to allow for the snowpack to fill the lake without overtopping the dam.

Newfound is prone to flooding because of its immense water shed and steep slopes around the lake. On saturated or frozen soil, 1" of rainfall can raise the lake by 14" very quickly. In the 1973 flood, the lake rose 1" per hour for about 2 days with the dam wide open! (The control dam could, theoretically, fall over as the maximum amount of water is restricted by the bridge concrete "wing walls" near the church.) The floods of 1937, 1973 and the hurricane of 1938 were probably 500 year events. In those events, the rate of rise slows down as the "bowl" reaches its top and spreads out. Lots of damage follows.

And???? The lake has tons of **organic material** washing into the lake Sometimes a lot. Other times a little. The lake, in a flood, turns a dirty chocolate brown for weeks and months. Imagine standing in that water ankle deep and not seeing your toes!!

Where did all the organic material go from those storms and subsequent, but smaller events? Obviously to the bottom of the Lake. The depth of the lake is its saving grace. (180' +/-).

Every year, organic material washes into the lake. The process is Eutrophication. *It is a natural process that results from accumulation of nutrients in lakes or other bodies of water. Algae that feed on nutrients grow into unsightly scum on the water surface or submerged rocks, decreasing recreational value and fostering*

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weed and grass growth. The nutrients come from the organic material naturally washing into the lake. In some areas development also exacerbates the process.

The only susceptible areas in Newfound are the shallow areas around the rim of the “bowl” That area is prone to a silt buildup and is the “potting” soil that encourages weed growth. The Cockermouth and Fowler rivers are “plugging” up and turning the outflow along the shoreline. Look at the popular “shallows” at the outlet of the Fowler River in Bristol. The accumulation of muck and silt in that area over the last decade is shameful. There is no substantial development in Alexandria. Ditto at the Cockermouth. The north end is also exhibiting weed growth. The water outflow can’t make it to the deeper water.

Now – Go back to the drone video. The deep blue area is deeper water. Not enough sunlight to grow anything. The sandy color is the critical area of the lake. LOWERING THE LAKE **IN THE FALL** TO 3.0’ WASHES OUT THE ORGANIC MATERIAL INTO DEEPER WATER resulting in less material accumulation. Less sunlight to assist weed growth.

From 1860 to 1980’s was, accidentally, good lake stewardship. In the 1980’s the dam was rebuilt and leakage greatly reduced. During that period, the shoreline was scrubbed automatically. Hearings held in the 80’s with the public stakeholders thought it better to keep the lake at a higher level. Hindsight shows it’s a mistake.

Study:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12CUw4Ko5OY3Z7bFw1ICUTnDd5438Mac7/view>

For example – Turbidity. It exists in the summer because the wave action along the shore suspends the accumulated material (Organic) and hazes the lake. If you cut a hole in the lake in early February and immerse a Secchi disk in the lake, you can see that disk almost at 60”. Think of a “snowglobe”

Common sense conclusions

Drop the summer (June 1st) target by .5 feet to 5.5 feet on the gauge

Gradually lower the lake level beginning mid to later September (or later) and ending in early November (or later) to **3.0 feet on the gauge**

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Hold this level until March 30th, whereupon the level can be gradually increased until June 1st

To the extent practicable, hold each level to at or below the target, not above.

Take this approach and re-evaluate in 5 years.

FAQ's

Will the above suggestions hurt navigation – NO

Can you remove your boat at the State ramp by early November? –YES

Will it inhibit recreation after October – NO

The **Newfound Lakes Region Association** does a great job in environmental education. Many discussions about Monarch Butterflies, Grey Rocks, water quality, watersheds and the like. They are sorely remiss on the lake level and its implications. Perhaps that's appropriate for a regional association. However . . .

If you want a clean lake free of weeds, it's time to become a common sense advocate on this important issue. The other topics are important but, in view, the NLRA group should take a vigorous definitive stand. The edge of the lake is in decline because of the dam and you need to parallel the "accidental management" plan that was in place for about 120 years. Educate and advocate the public to this issue. You're standing on the sidelines.