



President's Annual Report – January 2026

Under our Bylaws, the President is required to report annually on the affairs of the Association. I'd like to use this note to briefly share what we've accomplished over the past year and where we're headed.

When I began my term as President last year, I set out three key goals for the Hitchcock Lake Improvement Association:

1. Improve the environmental quality of Hitchcock Lake
2. Increase community involvement
3. Strengthen our finances so we can continue managing and protecting the Lake

I'm happy to say that we've made real progress on all three. I'll save the environmental update for last, since it's the most complex—and, in my view, the most important.

Community Involvement

Strong community involvement is the foundation for everything we do to preserve the Hitchcock Lake neighborhood. Whether you live on the north or south side of the lake, or in the surrounding neighborhoods, we all benefit from a healthy, peaceful, and beautiful lake. Our community activities help us connect with one another and remind us how fortunate we are to live near such a special natural resource.

This year, we significantly expanded opportunities for neighbors to get together. We sponsored at least 18 events, including four boat tie-ups, four kayak club gatherings, a community sing-along, a homemade pizza party, dock-to-dine on the north lake, a trivia night, and a holiday party.

We also held a fishing tournament that was so successful I was told the "Fishin' Factory" down the hill ran out of bait. Not only did participants have a great time, but the tournament entry fees helped fund our lake improvement efforts. Just as important, research consistently shows that strong social connections help people live longer and healthier lives—so I encourage everyone to get involved.

Financial Support

The Town provides important support for Hitchcock Lake by contributing to our weed control efforts, testing for bacteria at Mattatuck Beach, sampling stormwater, and providing engineering expertise for our dams. Still, the vast majority of the work to protect the lake is funded by HLIA dues and voluntary contributions.

This past year, we made a concerted effort to encourage everyone who lives on or near the lake to pay their dues. We were more successful than ever before, with Lakefront membership reaching over 80% — our highest ever – and off-lake membership growing 25% over the prior year.

While this is a terrific result, we still have more work to do. Ideally, every lakefront property owner would contribute, and we would see greater participation from our off-lake neighbors as well. Supporting HLIA not only helps preserve recreational opportunities and the peaceful character of the lake—it also protects and enhances property values. I hope we can continue working together to make that case to the few who have not yet joined.

Environmental Protection

When my wife and I moved to Hitchcock Lake in early 2019, my initial focus was on understanding how to reduce nuisance aquatic weeds. At that time, invasive Curly Leaf Pondweed was spreading and, in some areas, reaching the surface. Over the past few years, by insisting on early spring treatments and targeting problem areas, we've begun to bring that weed under control.

That said, improving lake quality goes well beyond managing one invasive plant. Lakes are complex ecosystems, and Hitchcock Lake—like all lakes—naturally ages as nutrients and sediment accumulate. Phosphorus, in particular, fuels plant and algae growth, which is why the lake often becomes greener and cloudier in August and September.

I've been discussing potential solutions with our consultant, Dr. George Knoecklein, with The Pond & Lake Connection, which treats the Lake for weeds, and also with a manufacturer of products designed to reduce phosphorus levels. Dr. Knoecklein has advised that we need additional study before choosing the best path forward. One option we are considering is a partial treatment to address phosphorus suspended in the water, particularly in the south lake, which flows to, and consistently appears cloudier than, the north lake. This could provide more data on the effectiveness of phosphorus treatment and lead to some improvement in water quality. I will keep everyone informed as decisions are made this year.

One thing is certain: any meaningful effort to improve the quality of Hitchcock Lake will be costly, and everyone who lives near and cares about the lake has a role to play. I truly appreciate your continued support, engagement, and commitment. Please stay involved, bring a neighbor with you to events, and don't hesitate to share your ideas. Together, we can ensure that Hitchcock Lake remains a place we are proud to call home—for many years to come.

Thank you for all you do to support Hitchcock Lake.

Warm regards,

Mark Sussman

President, Hitchcock Lake Improvement Association