

MELODY LAKE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE MELODY LAKE ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

JANUARY 2018

2018 ASSOCIATION DUES ARE NOW DUE

2017 was another year of 100% paid membership. That makes at least 14 years in a row. While that might sound good, let's take a good look at what it takes to reach that goal. According to our by-laws, association dues are due no later than February 15th. They have been that way since 9/11/2011 but for some reason less than 50% of our members are paid before that date. Many require 4 to 5 reminders and every year the same 3 or 4 members must be threatened with legal action before they pay. These reminders not only cost money, but also take the time of our Board to send out. When asked, the #1 reason for not paying on time is that they haven't had time. They don't seem to understand that the board also does not have the time to send multiple reminders, but do it anyway. Our largest bills such as taxes, insurance, etc. are due early in the year so early dues payment is important. In the end, we continue to have 100% membership, something that most associations only dream about. Let's make 2018 the first year to reach 100% without having to send out reminders. By now, everyone who receives this newsletter electronically has already been sent a dues notice and 2018 Guest Passes. To those who are receiving a "hard copy" yours are enclosed. Please take a minute to see if your dues have been paid. If not please send your \$100 check made payable to "Melody Lake Association" to Steve Smith, 824 Tyler St., Johnson City NY 13790. As always, additional donations are always welcome. Remember to fill out your guest passes and give one to anyone you want to share your rights with when you are not present. Remember that these guest passes are dated and will expire on 12/31/2018. All previous versions are void. Any nonmember unable to show us a valid guest pass will be asked to leave. Also remember that you are responsible for the actions of your guests. Please make sure they are aware of the rules and speed limits around the lake.

THANKS.....and see you in the spring.

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Melody Lake Association was formed on June 22nd, 1964 to: 1) Aid and promote the preservation and protection of Melody Lake and the land around it. 2) To aid in the protection of fish and game in such lake and area. 3) To promote and cultivate social relationships among its members; and 4) To undertake programs and activities calculated to advance the above purposes

IMPORTANT PHONE #'S, EMAILS, DATES AND INFORMATION

Melody Lake Association

PO Box 95

Willet, NY 13863

www.stny.info/melodylake

or visit us on Facebook

HOW TO CONTACT:

Association Officers:

President – Bob Rosati (607)863-4425 rcrosati@frontiernet.net

Vice President – John Opp (607)821-2697 j.opp47@yahoo.com

Secretary – Tami Zebrowski-Darrow (607)722-5994 (home), (607)863-4319 (lake) tzebrowski@stny.rr.com

Treasurer- Steve Smith (607)729-8823, sjstev@gmail.com

Member at Large – Jim Armstrong

Webmaster – Jim Pratt – (607)775-4925 jpratt@stny.rr.com

Emergency Response

NY State Police – (607)756-5604 or 911

Cortland County Sheriff – (607)753-3311 or 911

Fire & Ambulance – 911

NYS Dept of Environmental Conservation:

Conservation Officer – 1-844-332-3267 (24 hr)

Permits – 1-800-388-8244 or (607)753-3095 ext. 235

Dam Safety – (518)402-8150

Town Government Officials:

Willet Town Hall – 863-4877 (for building permits)

Town Supervisor – Alvin (Sandy) Doty – 863-3252

Town Clerk – Annie Wilcox – 863-4329

Highway Superintendent – Geno Turshman 863-3265

Tax Assessor – Frances J Butler 849-6966

Other:

Cortland County Health – 753-5035 (permits for wells & septic)

DOGS AROUND THE LAKE:

Remember that your dog must be under your control at all times. If the dog is loose, they must remain on your property. Every year we receive complaints from people walking around the lake that they are confronted by loose dogs. Excessive barking is also a nuisance and is in violation of the Town ordinance. All complaints should be referred to the Town of Willet Dog Warden. (Country Acres Animal Shelter – 749-2734)

There are new operating hours for the Willet Post Office:

Mon – Fri : 10 AM – 12 noon & 1 PM – 3 PM

Sat – 9 AM – 11:45 AM

ASSOCIATION FAMILY PICNIC – SATURDAY, JULY 28TH

THE MEETINGS FOR MELODY LAKE ASSOCIATION FOR 2018 WILL BE HELD AT 12:00 NOON ON THE SECOND SUNDAY OF JUNE, JULY,

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter by Melody Lake Association's diverse group of volunteers may not necessarily reflect the views held by the Association, its members, or its sponsors.

AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER. ALL MEETINGS WILL BE HELD AT THE WILLET TOWN HALL (unless decided otherwise). THE MEETING DATES FOR 2018 ARE:

JUNE 10th

JULY 8th

AUGUST 12th

SEPTEMBER 9th

YOUR IDEAS ARE IMPORTANT TO THE ASSOCIATION. PLEASE TRY TO ATTEND WHENEVER POSSIBLE. WE WILL ATTEMPT TO LIMIT THE MEETING TO ABOUT 1 HOUR HOWEVER WILL CONTINUE UNTIL ALL IMPORTANT TOPICS ARE DISCUSSED.

The Town Of Willet Town Board Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM. The meetings for 2018 are:

January 17th

March 21st

May 16th

July 18th

September 19th

November 21st

February 21st

April 18th

June 20th

August 15th

October 17th

December 19th

WE WOULD LIKE TO REMIND ALL PROPERTY OWNERS AND THEIR GUESTS THAT EVEN THOUGH MELODY LAKE IS A PRIVATE LAKE, ALL NYS LAWS APPLY. THIS INCLUDES, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO FISHING, HUNTING, BOATING AND MOTOR VEHICLE LAWS. ALSO REMEMBER THAT ALL BOATS THAT ARE POWERED BY AN ELECTRIC MOTOR (INCLUDING PONTOON BOATS) MUST BE REGISTERED. ALL NON-NYS RESIDENTS MUST HAVE A NONRESIDENT FISHING/HUNTING LICENSE.

CORTLAND/CHENANGO RURAL SERVICES

NEARLY NEW SHOP (gently used clothing)

2704 Lower Cincinnatus Rd, Cincinnatus, NY

Located at the Catholic Church (607)863-3828

Mon & Fri - 9:30 am – 11 am

Tues & Thurs – 9:30 am – 11:00 am & 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Wed – 9:30 am – 11:00 am & 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Sat–9 am –12 noon (also Local Farmers Market in season)

Remember that the speed limit on Melody Lake Rd. is 30

mph and on Melody Lane is 10 mph. Also parking on

Melody Lake Road is prohibited unless you are

completely off the road. Please remind your visitors and

everyone that you may be doing business with such as

contractors, fuel delivery companies, etc.



ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT BOB ROSATI

Well it's now 2018 and the weather has been near or below zero for a week and another week of the same predicted. Sort of makes me question the "global warming" claims. What better time to write about enjoying summer at Melody Lake. Once again I didn't expect to be writing this President's Column but I was elected again for two more years. It's hard to believe that I was first elected association president in 1990. I did have a few years off, but this still means that I have been president for more than 25 years. Each year at election time when I say that I am not running again, I get voted back in. This term runs until the end of 2019 so this is a good time to say that enough is enough. It's time for some new ideas from members that will be around a lot longer than I will. The next election is 2 years away which gives anyone a chance to get involved. Anyone can pick the minds of the current board, attend a directors meeting, and do whatever it takes to get involved. While there are many things that are required by law of each office, you will find that this association requires only whatever time you want to put into it. The one thing you do need is a dedicated team to work with which I have always had. I have also been blessed with several interested members to serve on committees and work sessions. 2017 was a fairly quiet year at Melody Lake. As always, the #1 complaint was excessive speed on Melody Lane. #2 was uncontrolled dogs. Both of these will be addressed later in this newsletter.

2018 will be a busy year for Carol and I. As many of you know, we usually take a midwinter cruise just to give us a break from the NY winter. This year we will still be taking a break from the cold as we travel to Palissa, Uganda in East Africa on a missionary trip with one of the pastors from our church in Lincklaen. Thanks to the generosity of neighbors, family and friends, including many of you, we have been able to raise \$40,000 of a

\$55,000 goal to help an orphanage as they build a Pig and Chicken farm to help keep them financially stable for many years to come. Carol and I will be spending 11 days helping to clear the land and start to construct the buildings. I'm sure the food and accommodations will not be the same as our usual cruise, but the memories and the rewards will be much greater.

Now, let's get back to lake stuff. For the first time in 24 years, Carol and I will not be attending the NYSFOLA Conference. If anyone is interested the association will pay \$200 for anyone to attend. That will cover most of the expenses for one member to go. This year it will be held on May 4th & 5th, 2018 at the Fort William Henry in Lake George, NY. The agenda is not yet available but the topics usually include dam safety, NYS Water Laws, fish, water quality, invasive species, algal blooms and much more. Your responsibilities will be to attend sessions of importance to Melody Lake and bring the information back with you. All meals and lodging are included along with a free wine and cheese hour on Friday night. The full agenda will be available soon at www.nysfola.mylaketown.com If you are interested please let me know.

**ARE YOU EXPECTING COMPANY WITH NO PLACE
FOR THEM TO STAY?**

COTTAGE FOR RENT

1362 Melody Lane

Two bedroom w/ additional sofa bed.

Full bath. New Septic System.

Recently remodeled with all new appliances

Available by the day, weekend or full week

A short walk for full lake access.

No Pets and No Smoking

For more information contact Bob & Carol Rosati

(607)863-4425 or rcrosati@frontiernet.net





Report From the Dam

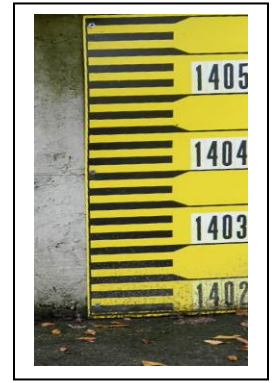
On August 31st, 2016, our dam was visually inspected by DEC Dam Safety. As in the past, the dam was generally in satisfactory condition and well maintained. One item that was of some concern was that there was some settlement of the rock fill under the downstream concrete splashpad. While this posed no danger to the stability of the dam, it could eventually cause the concrete pad to settle even more and possibly crack. Thanks to association member Scott Harris several loads of flat stones have been placed by the dam. Sometime this summer we will be having a work party at the dam to fill the void. We will also be completing some work that was started but never finished in 2016. The spillway concrete must be cleaned with a pressure washer and then sprayed with a clear sealant to preserve the concrete. The work can only be done when there is no water going over the dam and no rain is predicted for a couple days. If you would like to assist please let us know.

During last winter DEC reviewed the written Engineering Assessment (EA) on our dam. They questioned several parts of this EA and accepted it as a DRAFT until the questions were answered by our engineer. The board met with our engineer to review the concerns who has since prepared a report which has been sent to DEC for review. Hopefully we have some good news to report later this spring.

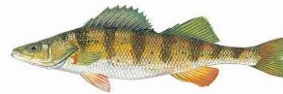
We are still looking for some volunteers to be on the Dam Committee. While we always have enough volunteers for our work crew, we do need some actual committee members. Being a committee member does require a little training on how to respond to the unlikely event of a “dam emergency” which requires around the clock surveillance which cannot be done by the current board only. If you are interested please let us know.

What’s That Strange Sign at the Dam??

We’ve had a few people asking the purpose of the bright yellow signs located on the piers at the dam. They’re known as a “staff gauge” and are used to monitor the level of the lake. The normal lake level is 1402’ above sea level which is the elevation of the spillway. These elevations are built into our dam “Inspection and Maintenance Plan” which is required by DEC. We use the elevations and current weather reports to tell us when the drains should be opened to lower the level of the lake. These gauges are important and should not be tampered with.



Fishing Melody Lake:



Melody Lake has always been known for great fishing. A common catch might include largemouth and smallmouth bass, crappies, bluegills, sunfish, yellow perch, bullhead, pickerel and an occasional walleye. Over the past couple years there has been some concern over the declining population of perch. In 2017, it was suggested that we look into stocking some additional perch. We checked with area hatcheries only to find that availability of perch was limited due to climate and weather concerns. When available, to purchase some 4-6 inches would be about \$2.50 each plus \$1.50/mile delivery charge so would not be financially beneficial to Melody Lake. It is obvious that our lake is suffering from a lack of aquatic vegetation and other structures that are important for the newly hatched fish of all species to have a place to hide...and survive.....from the larger fish established in the lake. Since there is a lack of hiding places from the large bass, we need to provide more places to hide for the little ones. We seem to have a view that our lake front needs to be “weed free”. All lakefront lot property owners are encouraged to keep at least ½ of their lake frontage forever wild. If you let Mother Nature take over, you will see many positive results in fisheries, sediment and water quality in Melody Lake. For more information on the fish of NY go to:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/98506.html>

Contact Information - We continue to ask for your updated contact information. Many members that do have an email address still don't want to share it with us. The reason is that several years ago, when we shared personal information with all members, this information was used to start a campaign to send negative information out to members in an effort to turn one group of members against another group of members. Since that time, many members have demanded that the association remove their contact information from shared records. NYS Not For Profit Law states that an organization is required to maintain a current membership list but cannot share it without permission. It is up to you to get to know your neighbor and share whatever information you feel comfortable sharing. Many times we are asked by members as to how they can contact their neighbor regarding a certain topic. We then contact that person and then, and only then, give them the contact information for the person trying to contact them.

There are other reasons to give us an email address.

1. This newsletter – all members will receive this newsletter. If we can send it electronically it will not only be sent with color photos, it will also have many “click on links” to visit additional information on topics, as well as websites to our sponsors sites. Hard copies and postage to send this newsletter cost between \$3.00 and \$4.00 per copy. You can see how this would add up if hard copies were mailed to everyone.
2. Minutes of meetings – NYS Not For Profit Law does not require distribution of the meeting minutes. These minutes are required to be made available for you to view, upon request, at the office of the association. Again, with the cost of postage we will no longer mail hard copies of the minutes. If we have your email address, we will continue to send them to you electronically.
3. Notice of a health concern – in the event that our water sample identifies a possible harmful algal bloom (HAB) or other health concern we will immediately pass this information on to all members we are able to contact electronically. We will not spend our time making phone calls or waste association funds for postage to contact other members that don't share their information.

Notice of Possible By-Law Change - Current by-laws state that a meeting will be held on the 2nd Sunday of June, July, August and September. Although the NYS Not for Profit Law requires only 1 annual meeting, we still see the need for more than 1 meeting. At the June 10th, 2018 meeting we will be voting to eliminate the September meeting. Historically this meeting is only attended by a few members and no important decisions can be made. If something important comes up, we are still allowed, by law, to have additional meetings as necessary upon notice to all members. Plan to attend if you want to vote on this matter.

Rights of Way – while many of our members have water front property, more than half must share a right of way to access the lake. Some of these rights of ways are owned by the association and must be maintained by all that use it. There are however, a few that are actually private property, but since the association has a permanent easement on these properties, the landowner must share the land with certain members. In most cases, your deed will tell you which right of way you should be using. Please respect the fact that it might still be private property and the right to use it may have some limits of what is allowed. Also make it a point to keep it clean and well maintained. You should also try to get to know the property owner and try to maintain a friendly relationship with them. Don't take it for granted that you can do whatever you want without first checking with both the property owner and the association.

A Lunker Under Every Dock – We've all heard that the big bass hides around structures. When we are out fishing from a boat, many times we try to cast as close to the dock as we can. Over the years we have had several complaints about fish hooks or lures being caught on the dock which causes a danger to the people that own the dock. Please have the respect and if you get snagged on the dock either take the time to retrieve your hook or let the owner know so the concern can be resolved before someone gets injured.

Pavilion at Melody Lake – 2018

By John Opp

The subject of constructing a pavilion at Melody Lake for members to use and as a place to hold association meetings has been discussed over the years. Last year the subject was brought up again and a check was made with our insurance company as to any impact such a pavilion would have on insurance coverage and premium. To our surprise, we were informed that our insurance coverage already has liability protection for such a pavilion so there is no increase to the premium.

That good news opens the door to start considering construction of a pavilion in an appropriate place on association property. The location selected needs to be good for access and for limited parking of vehicles or with parking within reasonable walking distance. That will be one of the first decisions this spring/summer: Where do we want to build it?

The cost is estimated to be less than \$5000 for all materials up to a pavilion measuring 36 feet by 18 feet, or similar size. It would be nice to keep it rustic construction like an open post and beam similar to the one we use at the Town of Willet property for picnics now. To keep cost down a gravel floor would be placed in lieu of concrete. Concrete could always be added.

The pavilion was a topic of discussion in the August and September meetings of 2017 and it was made apparent by some members that regular annual dues should not be used to pay for it. Some members on the hard road indicated they would not use it and have no interest in participating in it. If we have meetings in it I guess they will not be present. So a recommendation was made and approved by the Board that the pavilion would be paid for from donations. Donations that had been received as of the September meeting totaled approximately \$900. Treasurer Steve Smith has earmarked those to be placed in a special fund for the pavilion, with additional donations made after that to be placed in the fund unless a member indicates a specific alternate fund for any donation they may make.

It is our desire to build the pavilion by member's participation. The board will approach certain members with equipment at the lake to help. Construction will not start until sufficient funds have been received to cover the cost of all materials and construction needs. Site preparation, stone, and other miscellaneous materials were not included in two preliminary estimates prepared for different sizes of pavilion. Members will be asked to approve the construction budget and will be timely informed of any changes and completion schedule.

Site selection needs to be completed early in the overall process, so let your thoughts be known to the Board members. The flag property at the south end is one site, as is the ROW near the Turner cottage. Minimizing impact to members that live near the location is paramount in making a decision, and that will limit where a pavilion can be placed.

So make a donation with your membership dues for 2018, or as a separate donation to enable this project to get off the ground, or out of the ground

SOME MEMBERS “JUST DON’T GET IT”



Do any of these sign look familiar? While they seem clear to most of the members there seems to be a few that act as though they have never seen them. The most common complaint at Melody Lake is the speed on Melody Lane. There are more than 20 of these signs in the .4 miles of the road but continue to be ignored. Some of the signs were even purchased by our members in hopes of a better looking sign was more apt to be read. The first sign above was purchased by Norm and Eve LaMontagne. They even bought a few extra that will be installed before summer. The “Drive Like Your Kids Live Here” sign was donated by John Opp. Unfortunately the most common violators are the ones whose kids do live here. To show how long this has been a problem, the following is from a newsletter 18 years ago:

Melody Lane is less than a half mile long. For the most part it is a one lane dirt road with many blind curves. At 10 mph you can travel the entire length in less than 4 minutes. While it's true you can cut this time in half if you travel 20 mph, it will take an ambulance more than 20 minutes to get here from Cincinnati or Marathon at 60 mph if you run over one of the kids trying to enjoy summer at Melody Lake. It will also probably take more than 30 minutes for the Sheriff or State Police to arrive and God only knows how long the paperwork will take. In addition it will take the many years of hard work to pay off the lawsuit and the rest of your life to get over the guilt if someone is permanently disabled or killed. After a hard week at work, it's understandable that you just can't wait to get to Melody Lake to unwind. Please allow an extra 2 or 3 minutes to reach your destination. It will make your summer, and everyone else's more enjoyable.

Several times throughout the year I have a chance to talk to board members of other lake associations and ask how they handle a similar problem. The #1 answer is that they have eliminated the road maintenance budget and let the potholes remain. I must admit, the more money we put into road repair, the faster people drive. Let's talk about it at a meeting in 2018 before we spend \$1 on road repair. In the meantime, please slow down and when you invite some friends and family please inform them of the speed limit. Also make it a point to tell your fuel driver, UPS or anyone else you do business with.

PARKING ON MELODY LAKE ROAD

Several years ago parking on Melody Lake Rd. became a concern. The main problem was that trespassing people ice fishing would park along the road making plowing and emergency vehicle access difficult and sometimes impossible. It was suggested that the town make the stretch from the dam to the intersection of Melody Lane a no parking zone during the entire winter months. When approached, the town denied the request for a seasonal restriction but agreed to a year a round ban. A public hearing was held and all Melody Lake Rd. property owners were notified. There were no objections and the ban became law (Local Law #1 of 2004). The signs were legally posted by the county and it remains in effect today. Each year, mainly during deer season and ice fishing season tickets are issued. Until the law in changed, it will be enforced throughout the entire year.

Over the years, Melody Lake Association has been the topic of several magazine or newspaper articles. We're not quite sure how they found us but it seems like we have a reputation (mostly positive) not just locally, but nationally. These articles were never initiated by us, it just seems that somehow when they wanted an article about a certain topic, somehow they found us. It seems that it all started way back during the 1935 flood. An article in the Binghamton Press dated July 10th, 1935, told of a possible dam break at the Ellis Pond (now Melody Lake) Dam.

Villagers Flee as Willet Dam Break Looms

Walls Holding Back 80-Acre Pond Lashed With Rope

Willet, July 10—This small village of 200 residents was in danger of complete annihilation Tuesday night when the dam at Ellis pond, two miles east of here threatened to give way.

All residents, with exception of a few who remained in the village to do salvage work, moved to the hills and high areas nearby Tuesday night. This action was taken after the pond of 80 acres, fed by a heavy rain, rose three feet above the 24-foot dam.

Meantime, a crew of volunteer workers went to the dam where they used 400 feet of ordinary rope to lash the retaining wall as securely as possible. A set of signals was devised by the workers at the dam whereby all residents of the village—those on hills and those remaining in the village—might be notified in event the dam collapsed.

Danger of the dam breaking was reduced Wednesday morning when the rain ceased and the pond level receded. Ellis pond was used years ago for water power purposes and the dam, it is reported, is more than 60 years old. Residents returned to their homes Wednesday afternoon.

In recent years the pond has not been used, except by sportsmen and picnickers.

Damage was exceptionally heavy in Willet proper, according to officials. Willet creek, a narrow, ordinarily slow-moving stream, became a raging torrent Monday afternoon and Tuesday. Several houses were washed from their foundations and several barns were destroyed.

Light current was out of order until Wednesday morning and all wells were contaminated, according to village officials.

After that, things remained relatively quiet until late 1981 when we learned that an inspection by the Army Corps of Engineers determined that Melody Lake Dam, along with several other area dams had been found to be "unsafe" due to the inadequate design and size of our spillway. The initial estimate from our engineer was that it would cost up to a quarter million \$\$\$\$ to bring our dam into compliance. If the dam was not modified, the state could possibly order it removed. The association members voted to do whatever work we could by volunteers and attempt to come up with some less expensive modifications. Also, each member was assessed \$600 to complete the work. After 8 years, more than 2,500 volunteer man-hours and close to \$60,000 later our dam was finally brought up to current required standards.



The results of that project brought some light to the problems and liabilities connected with "private ownership" of dams. In 1990, the national inventory of dams showed that there were more than 75,590 dams in the US with the majority of these dams was under "private ownership". In the 1992 edition of a joint Army Corps of Engineers / Federal Emergency Management Agency publication titled "Water Control Infrastructure – National Inventory of Dams" they highlighted 2 private dams in the nation. One dam, the Woolen Mills Dam located in West Bend, Wisconsin would be removed due to insufficient funds to repair. The modification to show how a dam could be saved thanks to the efforts of our volunteers (continued)

PRIVATE OWNERS HIGH & SIGNIFICANT HAZARD DAMS
(Ranking incomplete listing)

MELODY LAKE ASSOCIATION
CINCINNATI ROTARY CLUB
INTERNATIONAL PAPER COMPANY
THELMA GIBSON
YACCA OF ARKON
ZEN STUDIOS SOCIETY INC
AMERICAN LEGION POST 1
CAMPFIRE CLUB OF AMERICA
HOPI TRIBE
HORSESHOE BEND HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
BATTLESHADE RESERVOIR CO
TEMPLE ISRAEL OF ALBANY
THE SACKLANTON ARMY
TRUSTEES OF SMITH COLLEGE
GOLF SOCIETY OF AMERICA WINDSOR COUNTY COUNCIL
UPLANDS RETIREMENT CENTER
DRAKES LANDING HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
WOODRYS TROUFF FABRI
KCHO LAKE HOMEOWNER ASSOCIATION
LEASURE VILLAGE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
LAKESIDE IMPROVEMENT ASSOC
SYDNEY WHITE
SHEEP CREEK IRR CO
HOOT OWL CLUB
UNITED METHODIST CAMPS & CONF.
BEAVER LAKE WILDERNESS CLUB INC
CLINTON HISTORICAL MUSEUM VILL
OSWEGO BROTHERS



Melody Lake Dam during restoration.



Melody Lake Dam after restoration.

Melody Lake Dam, built in 1902, impounds a 48-acre reservoir, a New York recreation spot with 97 summer and year-round residences. The dam was the first of a series of two dams located upstream of the Village of Willet. Failure of the dam posed a threat to the village residents because of the potential for a "domino effect" failure of the dams. Under a New York State statute, if repairs were not made, the dam could be breached by the state with the cost billed back to the owners.

Melody Lake Association, a volunteer group of property owners around the lake, is a typical non-profit private dam owner. Many older dams, built to support turn-of-the-century industries or an agricultural economy, have been bequeathed to private and municipal organizations that often lack the resources and expertise to manage the dams adequately.

Funding necessary to return Melody Lake Dam to a safe condition was not available through a government program nor through a commercial bank loan. Critical repairs to the dam were finally financed through a combination of community fund-raising activities, such as flea markets and chicken barbecues, voluntary donations from some property owners; and legal claims against other property owners.

Costs for the project exceeded \$59,000. In addition, over 2,500 man-hours of time were donated by volunteers, who rebuilt much of the stone dam by hand. It took the Association eight years to obtain the necessary resources, and to complete the rehabilitation of the unsafe dam.

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Our work at the dam would keep Melody Lake Association in the news for years. In 2011, I was contacted by the editors of *Clear Waters* a publication of New York Water Environment Association, Inc. They picked our association as a perfect example as to how a dam owner should view Dam Safety and wanted an article to publish. The story of our dam repairs was told again in "Lake Association Works for Dam Safety – Vital issue to Downstream Citizens".

Lake Association Works for Dam Safety – Vital Issue to Downstream Citizens
by Robert Rosati

Melody Lake is a small 48-acre private lake located in Cortland County in the Town of Willet, NY. Since the main portion of the dam is located directly downstream of the lake, and any major dam failure would most likely result in the loss of life, the dam is classified as a Class C-High Hazard Dam.

The Melody Lake Association, comprised of lakefront property owners, was first introduced to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Dam Regulations in 1998. A Phase One inspection completed by the US Army Corps of Engineers found this dam to be deficient due to an inadequate spillway and lack of an operable drain. The dam, which was built sometime in the mid to late-1800s, is constructed of dry built up stone, similar to a farmer's stone wall. Over the years, the stone have settled in, making the structure almost leak proof.



The downstream side of Melody Lake Dam on a dry day exposes its stone construction. The structure has been repaired, upgraded over the years to meet state regulation standards through the efforts of lake association members.

Bids from various engineering firms were solicited, with a low bid of just over \$150,000. Attempts to secure funding through loans or grants proved negative since the association had no source of secure income even though membership is required by all property owners. The association then approached various funders, such as garage sales, flea markets and chicken barbecues. Events such as these did little to raise the necessary funds. At first, the NYSDEC was patient but, after more than four years, it became obvious that association members needed to try to locate some other types of funding. Throughout this time, members suggested some less expensive ways to comply and after some negotiating, both NYSDEC and association engineers agreed to the group's suggestions.

With some of the work performed by association volunteers, an estimate of about \$60,000 would still need to be raised. Since the association had 91 property owners, all were assessed \$600 each, which was paid immediately by 63 of the members. Thanks to NYSDEC legal staff, the association was informed about a recent NYS Court of Appeals Decision in the Stearns Association of Fire Island, NY, Inc. v. Williams et al. case. Armed with this case decision and the

services of a local attorney, letters were sent to the remaining property owners advising payment. This resulted in many remaining members paying. With another letter noting payment, all but one property owner paid. (That last unpaid, decided to sell and move away.)

After eight years, over 2,500 volunteer hours and \$59,000 modifications were completed. The Melody Lake Association ship received a letter from the NYSDEC Dam Safety Office that, "inspection of the recently completed restoration work the structure to be in satisfactory condition and in compliance with the applicable dam safety criteria." It went on to state, "This association see to be complimented for a job well done."

For the next 20 years, the group's only involvement which was a periodic field inspection which continued to show the condition of the dam to be adequately maintained by the association.

Recent Regulation Updates

Sometime in 2006, association members were made aware through the state to update dam safety regulations. The efforts of the New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFLA), dam owners throughout the state were assigned these proposed regulations. A detailed look into the proposed major concern from many dam owners throughout the state became obvious that if adopted as proposed, many of the dam end up being removed or abandoned by the dam owner. Financial obligations alone would surely bankrupt many of the owners. These dam regulations became a frequent topic at NYSFLA annual conferences. The NYSDEC dam safety staff invited to be speakers at these conferences. Public meetings throughout the state, allowing dam owners to voice their opposition to the proposed regulations. Letters were written to NYSDEC and elected officials.

Throughout this time, NYSDEC staff made it obvious current safety standards were inadequate and the regulations were updated to assure that all dam owners fulfilled their obligation to maintain a safe dam, no matter what the cost. The NYSDEC however, assure the dam owner that adjustments to the regulations would be made wherever possible to make the new regulations affordable. Finally, on August 19, 2009, these new regulations adopted. While it is certain there are still many dam owners not happy the state as a result of citizen input - did make revisions to these new regulations.

Impact on Melody Lake

In a review of a Class C-High Hazard Dam, these regulations on the Melody Lake Association's "to do" list. The final completion of an Annual Certification Form providing basic information regarding the dam, the dam owner and name of the compliance. This form takes about 10 minutes to complete.

Next was an Inspection and Maintenance Plan which was completed by the association board of directors and sent to Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Given, other than time, the cost to the association was minimal.

In mid-summer 2016 I was contacted by the editors of *Cabin Living*. They were planning an issue with an article dedicated to Lake Associations and our association somehow was brought to their attention as an association that remains successful by working together. I sent in some information about our association and include in the December edition was an article titled "strength in numbers" which highlighted 3 organizations – Harvey's Lake Association (Barnet, VT), Vermilion Lake Association (MN) and Melody Lake Association (Willet, NY).

cabin living

Harvey's Lake, located in Vermont's North-east Kingdom at the foot of the Green Mountains, is named after Colonel Alexander Harvey, who returned to the area from Scotland for business.



BY GINA CHIODI GREISING

strength in numbers

Lake & Land Associations Have Your Back

Keeping an eye out for the best interests of your cabin's locale, whether it be on a sparkling lake, on land in gorgeous mountain country, or any one of the other myriad places that a relaxing retreat may be found, lake and land associations have your back.

These unsung heroes are usually behind the scenes volunteering their time to targeted projects to social organizations with get-to-know-you gatherings for members and cabiners, these associations strive to protect your cabin area, so you and the generations after you can relax and enjoy it.

Doing Good Work
Here's what's happening in a handful of these associations.

Constate, who captivated many of us baby boomers with his thrilling expeditions on television, owes a very small part of his success to Harvey's Lake (Barnet, VT, and Caledonia County). It was here, in the 1920s, that the pioneer of SCUBA gear attended a lakeside boys' camp where he learned to dive.

The association, which was founded in the early 1950s, backs that notable piece

"These local groups are the best, on-the-ground conservation organizations in the country, and they also tend to be the center of social life in areas that may be remote."

Dr. Costanzo swam in, "Our big get accomplishment is our greater program to check boats and other watercraft before they enter the water," says Jackie Sprague, secretary. With another letter noting payment, all but one property owner paid. (That last unpaid, decided to sell and move away.)

After eight years, over 2,500 volunteer hours and \$59,000 modifications were completed. The Melody Lake Association ship received a letter from the NYSDEC Dam Safety Office that, "inspection of the recently completed restoration work the structure to be in satisfactory condition and in compliance with the applicable dam safety criteria." It went on to state, "This association see to be complimented for a job well done."

For the next 20 years, the group's only involvement which was a periodic field inspection which continued to show the condition of the dam to be adequately maintained by the association.

Melody Lake Association – New York

Built in the late 1800s to supply constant water supply to a downstream mill, Melody Lake covers 43 acres including a dam. In 1902, many property owners around the lake formed the association, and today it has 83 active members.

The group monitors lake quality and deals with land zoning issues, and because they have a dam as part of their area, they must conform to regulations of the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). As such, each year they cut break, tighten gabions, clean the spillway and open valves and flush pipes in time for an annual inspection. "I'm extremely proud of the willingness of the volunteers to help out," said Bob Rosati, association president for the past 25 years.

But nothing compares to the "helping out" that volunteers from the early 1980s did when the dam was deemed unsafe by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Loving and protecting their lake, as in their mission, the association devised a viable plan. Volunteers did much of the back-breaking work themselves with a few contractors taking on the complicated tasks. After seven years, over 2,500 volunteer hours and \$59,541.19 (They wanted to keep the expense to \$60,000), the modifications were complete. The state DEC commended them saying "you and your association members are to be complimented on a job well done."

Vermilion Lake Association – Minnesota

Recently changing its name from the Sportmen's Club of Lake Vermilion, this 48-year-old, 2,400-member association



Spring-fed Melody Lake is a private lake with approximately 80 families as participating association members.



Lake Vermilion boasts northern pike, large and small mouth bass, emerald shiner and perch. There are plenty of muskie and walleye due to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' stocking program.

(continued)

They also asked for a true but humorous story from each association and mine was chosen.

Who Owns The Lake? You Own The Lake

Lake and land associations are spread across the country, and while they may differ in some small ways, their main concern is the same – the stewardship of the lake and land. Bob Rosati, Melody Lake Association President, had his eyes opened in conveying the group effort that this stewardship takes.

“After being Melody Lake Association President for close to 25 years,

I have a reputation for being either dedicated, bossy, a know-it-all or maybe a little crazy ... depending on who you talk to,” says Bob.

“One day my wife, Carol, and I were out fishing on the lake and overheard two young boys, about 7 years old, having the following conversation:

Boy #1 (pointing to us) – ‘Those are the people that own the lake.’

Boy #2 – ‘WOW, they really own the whole lake?’

Boy #1 – ‘I guess so. At least my parents said they think they do.’

“At first, I must admit that this concerned me,” says Bob. “But the more I thought about it, the more I was convinced that if more people thought that they own the lake, the more they might think about the health of the lake and how our activities affect the quality of our lake. In fact, my one quote I include in every newsletter is: ‘As property owners on Melody Lake, we have the obligation to alter our way of life to protect Melody Lake rather than alter Melody Lake to protect our way of life.’”

Being a member of your local association gives you a voice and a place to take action in the preserving of the area where your retreat is located.

“Lake People love their lakes, and there is no better way to protect the lakes than getting involved in the local lake or land protection group,” says Jeff Forester, Executive Director of Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates. “These local groups are the best, on-the-ground conservation organizations in the country, and they also tend to be the center of social life in areas that may be remote.”

Hats off to these lake and land associations for all they do in making our cabin areas wonderful places.

Photos this page courtesy lake and land associations; Photo on facing page courtesy Sarah Walls, Cedarbrook Studio

ASSOCIATION PICNIC:

In 2017, we had a record number of members getting together to enjoy a day of good food, good times and good fellowship. Our annual picnic was held at the Willet Town Hall Pavilion and since there was no meeting held, it was agreed that association business would not be discussed. Everyone brought a dish to pass so we were able to sample some family secrets. Even though the association furnished hot dogs and hamburgs, the hit of the day were a bbq. brisket, spareribs and smoked sausage flown in from Texas, compliments of Jeff and Renee Turner. Several cakes and other baked goods were donated for our cake wheel and a 50/50 raffle was a big hit. We also had a raffle with several donated prizes such as 2 - \$50 gift cards to Cincinnatus Home Center donated by Theresa Tyner, art work donated by member artists Doris Wilbur and Andrea Eastman. Wood carvings from Jerry Wilbur and several items donated by Cincinnatus Home Center.

We also were treated to a homemade wine tasting with wine donated by Rudy & Diane Bernard, Dan & Debbie Walker and Bob & Carol Rosati. I’m sure we are forgetting others that donated their time and talents. By the end of the day the association made a profit of over \$500 to go towards association expenditures.

This year the annual picnic will be held on Saturday, July 28th. Set up will be at 12 noon and we will plan to eat around 1:00. Additional information will be shared at the June and July meetings. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend this fun event.



AWARD WINNING NEWSLETTER:

Each year we try to send out a newsletter to all members that is educational, informative and entertaining. At the NYSFOLA annual conference, this newsletter is entered into a statewide newsletter competition. Over the past 10 years our newsletter has won first place at least 6 times and 2nd place once. After you read this newsletter we suggest you print page 2 and keep it handy. This is a one page reference of important dates, phone #'s and contact information for 2018.

If you would like to read any of these articles please contact me.

State of the Lake & Lake Management Report

Since we do have several new property owners over the past few years we wanted to share some water quality information. Back in the mid 80's our weeds were so dense that fishing, boating and swimming was next to impossible in many parts of the lake. We applied for, and were given an \$8000 grant to complete a "State of the Lake Report" detailing the current condition of the lake along with a "Lake Management Report" to identify a plan to encourage members to change some habits to attempt to improve the health of the lake. As always there are always some members that follow the plan while others continue to believe that how they act does not affect the lake as long as the others don't act the same way. The reports are too long to include in this newsletter but are available on our website. We still have several hard copies that are available to anyone that would like a copy.

Monitoring the Health of Melody Lake

It's been several years since we've had a reported harmful algal bloom (HAB) at the lake. In fact the last time we had a confirmed bloom was September 2013. In 2017 blooms were confirmed on more than 152 lakes in NY, many within 20 miles of Melody Lake (Tully Lake, Song Lake, Plymouth Res., Dean Pond to name a few). While this does not mean that we didn't have any, we just didn't have any reported or confirmed. Remember that an HAB is toxic and extremely hazardous to people and pets (especially dogs). If you suspect you see one please notify a board member. An immediate sample can be taken and sent and we should have the results in a couple days. If the sample shows an HAB the association will be notified and the information will be shared with all members that we have email addresses for. For more information on HAB's go to <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/91570.html>

"We abuse land and water because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land and water as a community to which we belong, we may then begin to use it with love and respect"
.....Aldo Leopold

"Let us not forget our local trusts and duties...let us especially remember the beauty of our lake and its shores...may we all do something...so that after another hundred years, our successors shall meet together and rejoice and thank us for what we have done."

...John D. Barrow, Landscape Artist (1824 – 1906)

CSLAP

As you might know, we have participated in a lake testing program called the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) since 1987. This program does have some cost to it. Each participating lake association is charged at least \$370.00. In our case, this fee is paid for by Cortland County Soil & Water Conservation District. (They also pay our NYSFOLA dues of \$100.00). In this program a sample of water is collected 8 times each summer. Some of the water is filtered. The rest is bottled raw and everything is sent to a lab in Syracuse where it is tested for several parameters. If an HAB is suspected, a separate sample is taken. The results have always shown that our main concern is a high level of phosphorous which is a nutrient responsible for plant and algae levels. When we first started this program our levels were so high that we knew we must take action. The last CSLAP testing results we've received was from 2016. For some reason it seems that our phosphorous readings are starting to decline. While this may be just a one year occurrence, we hope that it is the start of a long lasting trend because our members are starting to change habits that affect water quality. Let's see what the results of 2017 testing shows. We will have them to share within the next couple months. If you look at the results you will find that in some ways the quality of our lake is improving but there is always room for improvement.

You can find the results from the past several years of testing on our website. If you want to view a copy not on our website please contact President Bob Rosati. If you want to know what we test for and why we test for it just turn to the next page.

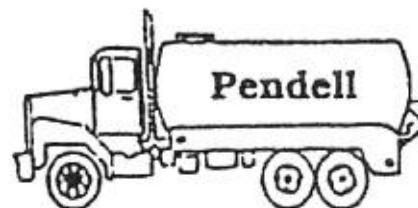
"As property owners on Melody Lake, we have the obligation to alter our way of life to protect Melody Lake rather than to alter Melody Lake to protect our way of life."
...Bob Rosati

Lake Parameters

Parameter	Importance
Water temperature (°C)	Water temperature affects the growth of plants and animals and the amount of oxygen in the water. It also affects the length of the water recreation season.
Water clarity (m)	Water clarity is measured with a secchi disk to measure how far down into the water column you can see.
Conductivity (µmho/cm)	Conductivity measures the amount of dissolved and suspended materials in the water, including salts and organic material. The amount of particles in the water may be related to geology or land use practices.
pH	pH measures water acidity. A pH value between 6 and 9 supports most types of plant and animal life.
Color (true) (platinum color units)	Water color is affected by organic matter (decaying plants). The color of water can affect water clarity and influence plant growth by limiting the amount of sunlight that can pass through the water.
Phosphorus (total, mg/l)	Phosphorus is an important nutrient for the growth of aquatic plants and animals in lakes. Too much phosphorus can harm aquatic life, water supplies, and recreational uses.
Nitrogen (nitrate, ammonia, and total dissolved, mg/l)	Nitrogen is also an important nutrient for the growth of aquatic plants and animals in lakes. Too much nitrogen can harm aquatic life, water supplies and recreational uses.
Chlorophyll a (µg/l)	Chlorophyll a is the primary pigment in green plants and estimates the amount of algae in a lake. The amount of chlorophyll a may be influenced by the amount of phosphorus and can affect the water clarity.
Calcium (mg/l)	Calcium is an important nutrient for most aquatic organisms and is required for mussel shell growth. Calcium enters lakes through natural limestone deposits. Calcium concentration is related to lake conductivity and improves the lake's buffering capacity to acid rain.
Use Impairment Surveys	Four question survey on the Field Observation Form that capture the user's observations of the quality of the lake for recreational use. This information is then linked to the water quality data.

WE'VE SAVED THE BEST FOR LAST.....OUR SPONSORS:

On the next few pages, let's take a good look at our sponsors. While we hate to have favorites, if we did, it would have to be **Cincinnatus Home Center**. There are very few places within a several hundred mile radius that you can find lumber, hardware, tools, fresh flowers, deli items, grocery, baked goods, fresh meat, beer, the list goes on and on. Not only do they support this newsletter, they also donate items to raffle at the meetings and our annual association family picnic. Next are two of the most important sponsors that help to keep our lake clean. Even though **Bob Pendell Septic Service** and **Kurt Vogel Septic Service** are in competition, it is important to keep them both busy to make sure our waste water doesn't end up in the lake. **Rita Mae's Flowers and Gifts** is also a long time sponsor. You can always count on her to provide a beautiful flower arrangement to fancy up your holiday table along with fruit baskets and more. Quite often she also has fishing worms and ice available. Need a bottle of wine for that special celebration (or no occasion)? You can always count on a good deal from John at **Country Wine & Spirits**. Many times he also has a special rack of "buy one get one free" wine that can't be beat. Need a tree cut down? **Precision Cut Tree Care** is the place to call. Several years ago we needed some work done and Ron Dingman was referred. Since then he has been the choice of several members around the lake. The cleanup can't be beat and he also has a stump grinder so by the time he's done you'll never know there was ever a tree there. Every year we see more and more pontoon boats on the lake. Most that you see have been purchased from **Route 96 Power and Paddle**. They also have a great selection of Kayaks, aluminum docks, paddle boats and more. If you are not sure what you want, they have a test pond where you can take a "test drive" before you buy. This year we also have 2 new sponsors. **Thunder Built Construction** is currently building an addition for a member on the lake. If you are planning to do some building or remodeling we suggest you give Bill a call for a quote. This will give you a chance to actually see some of their work. Joanne Sweeny of **Heritage Realty** is very familiar with Melody Lake since she and her husband Matt spend a lot of time at Donna Locke's cottage by the dam. Her ad says it all. Let's not forget some members that also pay to support this newsletter. Tim & Stacy Joslin are one of our newest association members. They are also the owners of **Melody Lake Road Greenery**. If you want to dress up your property, make it a point to visit their large greenhouse at 6133 Melody Lake Rd. Theresa Tyner of **Exit Realty** has been a member of the association for many years. She is also a contributor of raffle items for the association family picnic. **Bob & Carol Rosati** not only write most of this newsletter, they also have the only "cottage for rent" on the lake.



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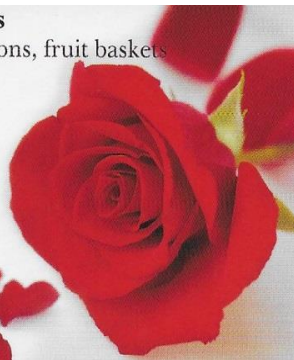
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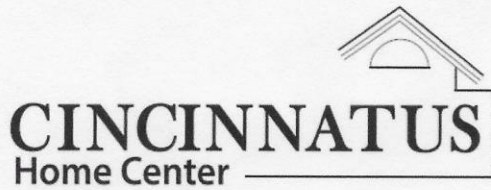


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