

THE FRIENDS OF LAKE WARNER AND THE MILL RIVER

2025 WINTER NEWSLETTER

2025: A Year of Progress and Partnership at Lake Warner

As we look back on 2025, we celebrate a year of meaningful accomplishments that advanced our mission to restore Lake Warner’s ecological health and enhance community access. Here are the key highlights:

CONSERVATION COMMISSION APPROVAL

The Hadley Conservation Commission approved our Order of Conditions for the Lake Warner Restoration Plan, a major milestone that enables us to implement a multi-pronged approach to invasive plant management, water quality improvement, and habitat restoration.

FUNDRAISING SUCCESS

Thanks to generous donors and community support, we raised over \$11,000 to fund restoration activities, volunteer programs, and infrastructure improvements.

WATER CHESTNUT REMOVAL

Working alongside the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) and more than 100 volunteers, we hosted 17 events, logged 273 volunteer hours, and removed over 20,000 pounds of water chestnut—that’s 165,134 rosettes cleared from the lake! These efforts are critical to restoring open water and improving habitat for native species.

MECHANICAL HARVESTING PILOT

In addition to hand-pulling, we piloted mechanical harvesting techniques to explore non-chemical alternatives for invasive plant control. This innovation will inform future strategies and hopefully, alleviate the need for herbicides.

IMPROVED RECREATIONAL ACCESS

We restored the boardwalks on the FOLW peninsula off Stockbridge Road, making trails safer and more accessible for fishing, birding, and boating. These improvements have already encouraged more visitors to enjoy the lake’s natural beauty.

STATE LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

Lake Warner hosted Secretary Lauren Jones of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and regional leaders for a paddle tour and discussion on the economic impact of outdoor recreation. This event highlighted Lake Warner’s role in workforce development and sustainable tourism.

Looking Ahead:

In 2026, we plan to expand mechanical harvesting, update our permit to allow for a winter drawdown, and continue building partnerships that strengthen both ecological restoration and community engagement.

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It Takes a Village - Community Outreach in 2025

In May the Friends continued a long tradition of tabling at the Amherst Sustainability Festival. Helen Amembal helped with set-up, and the tabling crew included Michele Morris-Friedman and Ginger Goldsbury. UMass Civil and Environmental Engineering graduate student Timothy Nsubuga brought water testing kits and explained the science behind our lake management efforts.. FoLW talked to many interested fairgoers and added to our volunteer list. Interestingly, we were placed next to the Fort River Watershed Association and discussed the possibility of meeting with watershed associations from around the region. Andy Morris-Friedman and Krista Oesterling-Rising helped take down the tent.

On September 13, the Connecticut River Conservancy hosted a Thank You Picnic to celebrate all the volunteers who helped pull water chestnuts this season. Kelly Beerman and Becca Smith from CRC organized the event and raffled off CRC swag for attendees. Brian Pearson from Friends of Lake Warner assisted with setup and grilling. Over 30 people joined in the festivities. A big thank you to North Hadley Congregational Church for generously providing the kitchen, lawn, and grills.

On October 5 the Friends held its annual community cookout and potluck behind the North Hadley Congregational Church. The crowd was small this year, so we gathered in a circle as the cooks worked the grill and talked about the lake and FoLW's plans. It was a lovely evening.

On October 21 Michele, Andy and Tim did outreach at the UMass Non-Profit Fair, an event that we have participated in for several years. In the process we networked with faculty and staff who might be able to collaborate with us in the future and also met students interested in volunteering.

On November 22 FoLW had its first-ever table at the Hadley Mothers Club Holiday Fair at Hopkins Academy. Michele and Ginger took the helm and made some good connections with Hadley residents and organizations. We are very appreciative of the Mothers Club for including us in this well-attended event.

FoLW is Seeking New Board Members!

Are you passionate about local conservation? Join us in protecting and improving the Lake Warner watershed. We're a hands-on board looking for volunteers to help with:

- Fundraising & grant writing
- Strategic planning & outreach
- Communications & invasive species management

The board meets monthly, and members often join seasonal activities like water chestnut pulls.

Interested? Email friendsoflakewarner@gmail.com to learn more!

Adding Mechanical Harvesting Capabilities

In 2025, our efforts to control invasive aquatic vegetation gained a major boost with the inclusion of mechanical harvesting in the Order of Conditions issued by the Hadley Conservation Commission. This approval allows us to increase harvesting capacity across Lake Warner and supports our goal of a healthier, more resilient ecosystem. By prioritizing physical removal methods, we aim to protect water quality, preserve biodiversity, and engage the community in hands-on stewardship. Below is a summary of our accomplishments

EXPANDED CUTTING AND REMOVAL OPERATIONS

- Multiple rounds of mechanical cutting were completed. These efforts disrupted WC growth and reduced seed formation, helping to limit next year's spread.
- GPS surveys and drone reconnaissance were initiated to identify hidden WC reservoirs and improve efficiency for future campaigns.

EMERGENCY WEED RAZORING

- Faced with dense WC mats overwhelming traditional tools, we adapted a Weed Razor for boat-mounted use. This innovation allowed us to cut narrow channels through thick vegetation and flatten large WC piles within a week.
- While not perfect—roots and some seeds remained—the approach significantly disrupted WC growth and prevented further nut maturation. Over 1,000 pounds of floating rosettes were collected manually following cutting, reducing nutrient load before winter freeze.

BARGE TRANSPORT

- Recognizing that 90% of the effort lies in transporting harvested vegetation, we are developing a barge system for use in 2026. This concept integrates:
 - A shallow aquatic vegetation combine harvester (SAVCH) for cutting and packaging.
 - A reinforced push boat powered by a mud motor.
 - A custom-designed scow-style barge capable of holding up to two cubic yards of vegetation.
 - A tilting tandem-axle trailer for efficient offloading.



The Connecticut River Conservancy Assisted FoLW by Leading 17 Water Chestnut Pulls Last Spring and Summer.

Number of events:	17
Total Volunteers:	100+
Volunteer Hours:	273
Pounds of WC removed:	20,897
Water Chestnut Rosettes Removed:	165,134

A Huge Thank You to Our Partners and Volunteers!

In 2025, our water chestnut removal efforts were powered by incredible community support and the leadership of the Connecticut River Conservancy. Together, we hosted 17 events, engaged 100+ volunteers, and logged 273 volunteer hours. Thanks to this dedication, we removed an astounding 20,897 pounds of water chestnut—that’s 165,134 rosettes cleared from Lake Warner! These results reflect the strength of collaboration and the shared commitment to restoring the health of our lake.

We thank CRC staff Mike Gula, Leah Hardacker, Elena Woodworth, Kelly Beerman and Becca Smith for steering this effort. And thank you to Adventure East for providing additional boats.

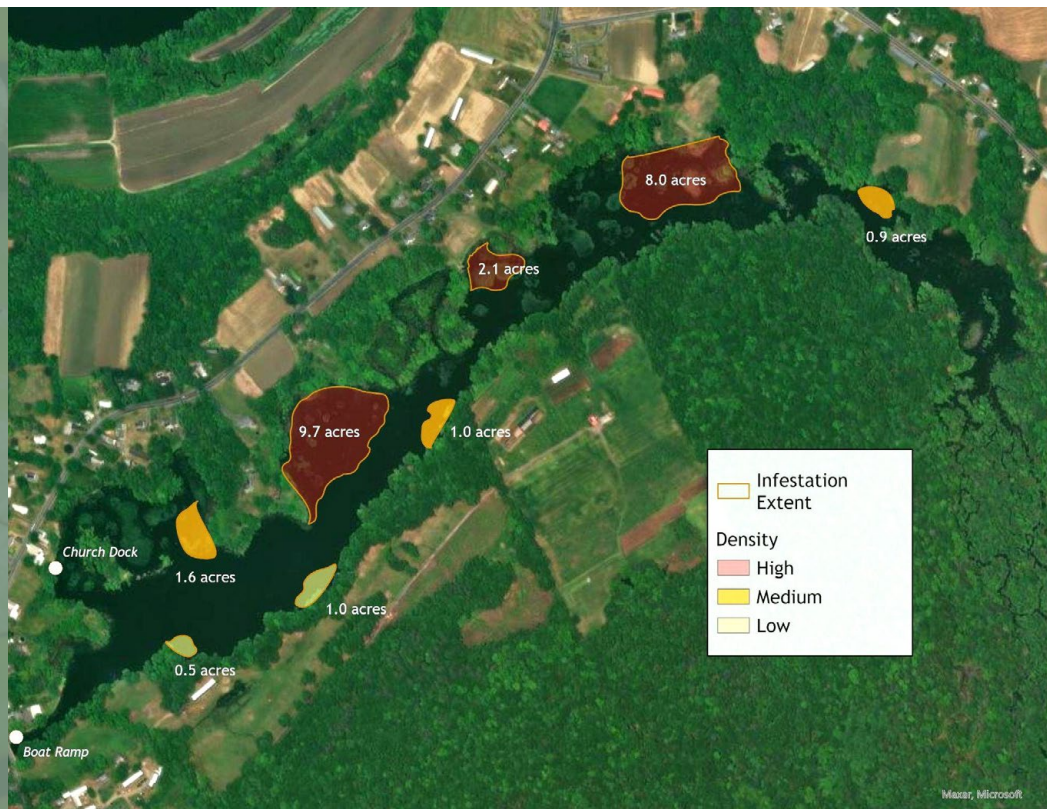
WATER CHESTNUT VOLUNTEERS 2025

Bin Wang
 Royce Wang
 Quinnlan Steele
 Anna Goldstein
 Dianne Snyder
 Lauren Thompson
 Sabina Oldham
 Gregory H. Doran
 Anna Norcross
 Alex Gouvin-Moffat
 Suzanne Robert
 Alec Mayfield
 Huey Wu (and guests)
 Brendan Geiger
 Matthew Sniffen
 Rebecca Sniffen
 Alix Sniffen
 Jaidon Lauridsen
 Steven Lauridsen
 XiaoLi Zhong
 Huiming Huang
 Lynne Paju
 Valerie Caro
 Valeria Diaz

Allen Stockbridge
 Alexa Del’Acqua
 Jeremy White
 Martha Elliot
 Grace Joy
 Darwin Irish
 Susan Young
 Kathleen Fitzgerald
 Diana Chaplin (and guest)
 Anna Norcross
 Martha Elliot
 Noah Castonguay
 Marissa Davidson
 Brett McGuinness
 Gail Garrabrants
 Samantha Scibelli
 Michael Eriquezzo
 Jeremy White
 Jackie Cullen
 Lauren Potter
 Jordan O’Hare Gibson
 Rebecca Banach
 Michael Banach
 Christopher Ware

Sarah Bacon (and guest)
 Jackson Royal
 Norma Roche
 Jessica Collins (and guest)
 Christian Lietzau
 Kimberly Hoyt (and guest)
 Humayun Sherwani
 Alec Mayfield
 Anna Klimes
 Rebecca Washut
 Isabel Espinosa (and guest)
 Allen Stockbridge
 Judy Rimmel (and guest)
 Sabrina Smith (and guest)
 Timothy Nsubuga
 Candy Krepel
 Paul Krepel
 Ron Grosslein
 Bill Warren
 Michael Hawthorn
 * Apologies to anyone we may have left out inadvertently.

Water Chestnut Infestation Survey September 2025



Why a Winter Drawdown Matters for Lake Warner

In 2026, we will update our permit with the Hadley Conservation Commission to allow for a winter drawdown of Lake Warner. This important step will enable us to implement a proven, non-chemical strategy for managing invasive aquatic vegetation. By temporarily lowering the water level during the coldest months, we can expose plant roots to freezing and drying, reducing regrowth in spring and complementing our summer hand-pulling and mechanical harvesting efforts. This approach highlights our intent to prioritize non-chemical restoration strategies to avoid or minimize conditions for which such treatments might be necessary.

Excessive aquatic plant growth continues to threaten both the ecological health and recreational value of Lake Warner. While summer hand-pulling events have removed thousands of pounds of water chestnut, invasive species are growing faster than manual efforts can keep up. To complement these efforts and reduce reliance on herbicides, Friends of Lake Warner is planning a winter drawdown—a proven, non-chemical method that aligns with community concerns and state wildlife standards.

BENEFITS OF A DRAWDOWN

Kills invasive plants naturally: Lowering the water level exposes roots to freezing and drying, preventing regrowth in spring.

Reduces nutrient buildup: Drying shoreline sediments helps limit nutrient release that fuels future plant growth.

Supports integrated management: Drawdown works alongside hand-pulling, mechanical harvesting, and future water quality treatments for long-term success.

Wildlife-friendly: The plan follows MassWildlife guidelines to protect fish and other aquatic life, retaining 80% of lake volume as refugia.

HOW THE DRAWDOWN WORKS

Gradual lowering: Water level will be reduced by about 3 inches per day to reach a 3-foot drop by December 1.

Controlled outflow: Gate adjustments will maintain steady levels through winter, allowing exposed sediments to freeze.

Refill by spring: The lake will be fully restored by April 1, timed to avoid fish spawning and ensure ecological balance.

MANAGING RISKS

The process adheres to state performance standards and is carefully timed to minimize wildlife impacts.

Continuous monitoring will guide adaptive management, ensuring lessons learned improve future restoration strategies.

Looking Ahead:

This drawdown is part of a broader integrated plan that includes water quality monitoring, wetland buffer restoration, and phosphorus reduction. By working together, we can restore Lake Warner.



FOLW Adds Environmental Scientist to Staff

In October, Becca Smith joined FOLW on a part-time basis to update our Lake Management Plan and develop grant opportunities.

Becca's personal and professional path is rooted in a love for the natural world and wild places, and guided by a commitment to protecting them. She holds a B.A. in Environmental & Marine Science and Policy from Smith College and an M.S. in Sustainability Science from UMass Amherst, and currently lives in Greenfield. Becca started working at Lake Warner in 2025 as the Aquatic Invasive Species Field Manager for the Connecticut River Conservancy, leading weekly volunteer water chestnut pulls. She is excited to continue working with the Friends of Lake Warner to improve the ecological health and resiliency of this special place, and build community around conservation.

WINTER TREES

BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

All the complicated details
of the attiring and
the disattiring are completed!
A liquid moon
moves gently among
the long branches.
Thus having prepared their buds
against a sure winter
the wise trees
stand sleeping in the cold.

THE THAW

BY HENRY DAVID THOREAU

I saw the civil sun drying earth's tears,
Her tears of joy that only faster flowed.
Fain would I stretch me by the highway side
To thaw and trickle with the melting snow;
That mingled, soul and body, with the tide,
I too may through the pores of nature flow.

Thanks Are Due

The Friends would like to thank the people who volunteered on land this past year. You repaired our boats and staffed events and supported outreach efforts. You showed up at meetings to discuss your concerns. You cared about the lake and we appreciate you.

Ginger Goldsbury
Andy Morris-Friedman
Jason Johnson
Gail Garrabrandts
Jacob Lindeman
Linda Wallack
Helen Amembal
Ro Amembal
Krista Oesterling-Rising
Tom Harris

Tim Nsubuga
Marc Solomon
David Moskin
Jonathan Carr
Nicole Blum
David Moskin
James Sector
& other volunteers who wish
to remain anonymous

Special thanks to the Boisvert family for their help with dam maintenance, clearing brush that hadn't been cleared in years. A big shout-out to Joe Boisvert Jr. for his excellent excavation work removing the compost pile at NHCC and covering it with wood chips



**Thank You
to Our
Generous
Donors
in 2025!**

Courtney Afonso
Helen Amembal
Barbara & Michael Burkart
Christopher Devine
Leslie Edinson
Maria Gallo
Gail Garrabrants
Ginger Goldbury
Elaine Goodhind
James & Gerry Harvey
Janice Jorgensen
Allison Ryan
Edgar Sabogal
Benjamin Snyder
Fran Vantreese
Robin & Eileen Wood

UPCOMING EVENTS

**Hadley Legion Post 271 Ice Fishing Derby
February 8, 2026 • 7:00 AM – 1:00 PM • North Hadley Pond (Lake Warner)**

Bundle up and join the Hadley Legion for their 2nd Annual Ice Fishing Derby on Lake Warner! Anglers of all ages can compete for prizes in adult and youth categories, with awards for the largest catch. Entry donations are \$20 for adults and \$5 for kids (15 and under). A valid fishing license is required for participants 15 and older.

Questions or sponsorship opportunities? Contact Kevin Roak at 413-588-5551.

**Birding with John Green
May 3, 2026 • 8:00 AM • Lake Warner Peninsula**

Join naturalist, photographer, and seasoned birder John Green for a morning of discovery on the Lake Warner peninsula. With over five decades of experience—including work with the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, the U.S. Forest Service, and bird surveys at UMass Amherst—John will share expert tips on bird identification, calls, and migration patterns during this guided walk.

Register: <https://bit.ly/FOLW-JG>



**Karrin Allyson & Miro Sprague in Concert
June 21, 2026 • 4:00 PM • North Hadley Congregational Church**

Enjoy an intimate afternoon of music with five-time Grammy nominee Karrin Allyson and acclaimed pianist Miro Sprague. Both artists share a deep connection to the Pioneer Valley and Lake Warner. This promises to be a warm-hearted, fun-filled fundraiser you won't want to miss!

Register: <https://bit.ly/FOLW-KA>

**Full Moon Fundraiser Paddle
June 27, 2026 • 7:00 PM • Lake Warner Boat Ramp**

Experience the magic of Lake Warner under the full moon! Sponsored by Adventure East, this special evening features a guided paddle in two 24-foot voyageur canoes. A unique way to support our mission while enjoying the beauty of the lake at night.

Register: <https://bit.ly/FOLWFullMoon>

**HOW TO DONATE
TO FRIENDS OF
LAKE WARNER**

Mail donations to:
Friends of Lake Warner
P.O. Box 11 Hadley
MA 01035

Donate at our website:
friendsoflakewarner.org/give

Zeffy
donations
using this
QR code.



Please Join The Friends of Lake Warner and The Mill River. The lake needs you!

We are a non-profit, citizen community organization. • Members receive a bi-annual newsletter. • Members are invited to participate in our activities, workdays and social events. • Your tax-deductible dues support our efforts to preserve, clean and maintain Lake Warner. • Your dues also support the printing cost of our brochures and newsletters.

I want to join ! Individual membership - \$25 Family membership - \$35 Sustaining membership - \$100

Name _____ Phone _____

Street Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Email _____

Please make checks payable to: Friends of Lake Warner (FOLW) Checks should be mailed to: Friends of Lake Warner, PO Box 11, Hadley, MA 01035