

Lake Conference Maine 2026

Topics & Presenters

Morning Sessions

Keynote Address: How to Win the Messaging Battle on Climate Change: Our Lakes Need Your Help

Rooms 1 and 2 – 9:30

Climate change is one of the most important issues in the world; but there's a problem-messaging around the topic has turned many people away. Drawing on almost 20 years of statewide feedback communicating about climate and the environment, Keith Carson will explain which words, phrases, and messages spur action and which send people into their political bunkers. He will cite specific campaigns that worked and others that backfired; while offering advice each audience member can apply to their role in the fight for the environment and against climate change. There will also be a Question-and-Answer portion to explore topics that aren't covered in the talk.



Keith Carson, Maine Conservation Voters

Former meteorologist for NewsCenter Maine and The Weather Channel and now the Director of Environmental and Science Communications at Maine Conservation Voters, Keith is on a mission to share the science of climate change and motivate people to make positive changes for the earth. Keith will share his expertise on ways to communicate effectively and take action, framed in the future of lakes in the face of change.

Plenary Address: Connecting Lakes and Communities: Understanding the Roles and Communication Practices of Volunteer Lake Monitors

Rooms 1 and 2 – 10:50

Previous research on water monitoring volunteers commonly focuses on data collection, learning outcomes, or motivations, while less is known about how lake monitors interpret their positions as participatory scientists. Drawing on role theories to understand how volunteers in long-term lake monitoring programs define and enact their unique roles within their lake communities, this research explores factors that influence communication behaviors. Using surveys followed by focus groups, quantitative and qualitative data were collected from lake monitors in four long-term monitoring programs in the United States (ME, MN, NY, VT). Exploring the relationship between roles and communication provides insight into social ties, community outreach, the organizational role of lake associations, and recommendations for lake monitoring program engagement. Additionally, recommendations from this research will be provided to volunteer lake monitors and program coordinators to promote a comprehensive understanding of the monitors' contributions and challenges regarding monitoring and communication.



Sabrina Koetter, University of Vermont

Currently wrapping up her Masters thesis work at the University of Vermont, Sabrina will share results from her research into pathways of information sharing and outcomes for participants in volunteer water monitoring programs. Some of you may have interacted with Sabrina over the last year or filled out her survey. She will share lessons learned and ways to help us all engage more people in action for healthy lakes as they face a changing future.

Afternoon Sessions

Impacts of Maine's Drought Conditions on Lake Storage and Water Quality

Rooms 1 and 2 – 1:15

Maine's annual precipitation is generally increasing, yet parts of the state have experienced "extreme drought", as defined by the U.S. Drought Monitor, in three of the last ten years. These droughts represent extreme hydrologic conditions which have wide ranging impacts, from industry to public health. Stakeholders work together to respond to current drought impacts and build resilience for future droughts. Lake water storage is of specific concern because of the reliance of public water systems on surficial water sources. Furthermore, drought conditions influence lake water quality and, in cases, have been associated with algal blooms. This presentation will discuss the hydrologic conditions which define Maine's droughts, the hydrologic connectivity between lakes and groundwater, and drought impacts to lake water quality, namely how drought can promote the mobilization of phosphorus from soils into surface waters.



Mary Szatkowski, Maine Geologic Survey

Mary is a hydrogeologist for the Maine Geological Survey. Prior to joining MGS, she worked in Arctic Alaska evaluating impacts to lakes and streams from infrastructure development and climate change. Mary's most recent projects have focused on water usage, drought, and the Maine Cooperative Snow Survey.

Forests for Maine Fish

Room 3 – 1:15

Forests for Maine Fish is a new program highlighting the important connection between Maine's forests and fish. This presentation will showcase why shoreland areas are important for high quality fish habitat and how to manage the areas around and behind your home in a fish and wildlife-friendly way to benefit both fish and the many other aquatic and terrestrial animals that depend on our forests.



Sally Stockwell, Maine Audubon

Director of Conservation at Maine Audubon, Sally is a wildlife ecologist with over 40 years of experience conserving wildlife and wildlife habitat across the state of Maine. Since 2013 Sally has been promoting wildlife-friendly forest habitat management through the Forestry for Maine Birds program. More recently, Sally worked with numerous partners including Maine Lakes to draft a Forests for Maine Fish guide on managing shoreland areas and surrounding woodlands to enhance fish and other riparian wildlife.

Native Plant Allies for Land and Lakes

Rooms 1 and 2 – 2:00

In this presentation, we learn how the well-being of our lakes encompasses understanding the health of the soil and the benefits of native plants as allies. Key takeaways will include exploring the inherent functions of native vegetation (from keystone species to groundcovers) within our ecosystems and examples of practical solutions for a buffer to build sustainable resilience with native plant allies for land and lake.



Ivonne Vazquez, Bas Rouge Farm & Forge

Ivonne is passionate about native plants, herbs, pollinators, DIY, sustainability, the environment, and sharing gardening knowledge. She is most often found outdoors using her skills as a former Master Gardener Volunteer, Licensed Registered Maine Guide/Recreation, Basic Gardening Instructor at Bangor (Maine) Adult Community Education, and native plant nursery owner at Bas Rouge Farm & Forge, Orono, Maine.

In addition to growing and selling native plants, she has been a freelance writer on a variety of gardening topics and articles for the Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners magazine, published by MOFGA; and an avid photographer whose main subjects are native plants and pollinators. She travels throughout Maine speaking and presenting workshops to a variety of audiences. Ivonne holds certificates in Sustainable Landscapes & Garden Management, Permaculture Design and, in 2025, she obtained credentials from the ANSI Accredited National Green Infrastructure Certification Program (NGICP) as a Green Infrastructure Practitioner.

Ivonne sits on the Boards of the Maine School Garden Network, Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association (MOFGA) & Fedco Seeds.

Social Marketing to Prevent the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species

Room 3 – 2:00

Maine's inland waters are integral to residents' and visitors' quality of life and to the State's economy. These waters provide habitat for aquatic plants and animals. While some of Maine's waters have been negatively impacted by AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species), Maine still has much to protect. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) addresses AIS (primarily aquatic invasive plants) – in three ways: prevention, early detection, and control. Currently, Maine DEP's efforts to reduce the spread of AIS include the Courtesy Boat Inspection (CBI) Program, early detection and control programs to reduce current infestations. These efforts and promoting Clean, Drain, Dry practices along with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, lake organizations, and municipalities throughout the State are what has helped limit the number of AIS infestations in Maine.

This project uses community-based social marketing (CBSM), a data-driven approach that leverages behavioral science, to develop a public engagement campaign to foster cleaning behaviors that benefit Maine's inland waterbodies and prevent the spread of AIS.



Toni Pied, Maine DEP

Toni works with the Aquatic Invasive Species Unit at the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. Toni has been working to protect Maine's natural resources for over twenty years and has dedicated much of that time to protecting one of Maine's most treasured resources, our lakes. Toni grew up in Massachusetts and was fortunate to spend much of her childhood exploring Maine's lakes, forests and mountains.

After earning a degree in Environmental Science and Biology from the University of Maine Farmington, Toni moved to Gardiner, where she lives with her family, and works to protect the place that fostered her love of the outdoors. In her spare time, she loves exploring Maine's lakes, forests and coast; hiking and kayaking.

Lake Association Innovation Panel

Rooms 1 and 2 – 3:00

Carol Branning, Annabessacook Lake Improvement Association: Carol is the President of the Annabessacook Lake Improvement Association in Winthrop and has helped the association raise significant funds for AIS work (\$52K in 2025 alone!). She and the ALIA board are vocal advocates speaking up in Augusta for lake protection issues, they have helped secure grants for watershed surveys, and they have been involved with the recent Loon Restoration Project, where volunteers from ALIA installed two loon nesting platforms.

Laurie and Jim Fenwood, Cold Stream Camp Owners' Association: Both retired wildlife biologists, Jim and Laurie spend their summers on Cold Stream Pond in the camp that Jim's grandfather built in 1937. They appreciate that Cold Stream Pond is currently one of the clearest lakes in Maine, but see threats to water quality are increasing every year. They are active members of the [Cold Stream Camp Owner's Association](#), an organization committed to protecting and improving water quality in the lake. Jim is on the board of directors and administers the CSCOA website and email campaigns, and Laurie produces the association newsletter.

Dave McDermott, Sebec Lake Association: Dave is a family physician who has lived and practiced in Dover-Foxcroft for over 30 years. He and his wife Ellen have a long love for Sebec Lake and he followed her into service on the Board of Directors of the Sebec Lake Association in 2024. He is now the President of the Sebec Lake Association. Nearly a third of the public comments submitted to the Legislature in 2025 related to the legislation on floating camps came from members of the Sebec Lake Association. He'll share his experience in educating Association members to pressing concerns at the State House and some of the tools they have used to increase engagement.

Shon Theriault, Cobbossecontee Lake Association: Shon is the Lake Manager for CLA and provides lake users with a year-round point of contact for anything involving the lake. His role helps protect and enhance Cobbossee Lake, ensuring it remains a vibrant and beautiful resource for our community. Shon was a Maine Game Warden for 26 years and is deeply committed to safeguarding our waters and supporting a healthy environment for everyone. He has witnessed our environment changing over his career and has worked tirelessly on conservation efforts to ensure future generations can enjoy what we have. He believes education and outreach are the best tools for success.