



PRESIDENT'S REPORT Elliott Hillback, IRLC President

If it is to be, it is up to us.

Spring again, and not a moment too soon!

Thinking about Spring, I don't know how each of you first got connected to the Indian River Lakes but my first visit was late one Spring almost 50 years ago. Margie and I came to visit her family's cottage on the western shore of Butterfield Lake that her grandparents had purchased in 1914. Eight years later we purchased the cottage. After that it didn't take us long to go through the following thought progression about the Indian River Lakes that is probably familiar to you:

"A Nice Place"

"A Special Place"

"A Special Place to Love"

"A Special Place to Love Forever"

"A Special Place to Love, Enhance,
Care For and Enjoy Forever"

Sound familiar?

The Indian River Lakes Conservancy is a 17 year old local Land Trust made up of, and supported by a wide variety of people who, for one reason or another, have come to that same conclusion – that this is a "Place to Love, Enhance, Care For and Enjoy Forever". Our lives and the lives of future generations are tightly connected to the Indian River Lakes and the surrounding landscapes. We are dedicated to expanding our understanding and enjoyment of this Special Place. We help people enjoy the area through events like our paddles on the lakes and guided or unguided walks on our public trail network and planned accessible trails. Our new

education center (now being designed) will be built in the recently donated Redwood Hill Preserve in the hamlet of Redwood. It will become a key focal point for our educational activities (adult and young people), for scientific collaborations, for interaction with the broader Indian River Lakes Community and many other meetings and events.

I highlighted the adage: "If it is to be, it is up to us" in our last newsletter. If something needs to be done we must step up, we cannot wait for someone else to do it. We believed in that phrase when the IRLC was started and it is even truer today. We are committed to applying our leadership, organizational, and resource generating efforts and capabilities to help ensure the environmental, recreational and economic future of our area. Land based efforts in areas such as wildlife habitat remediation, protection of wetlands, and invasive species management are cornerstones of our ongoing Stewardship Program. Recently, several dangerous blue-green algae blooms dramatically served notice that water quality in our lakes is declining. It is deteriorating toward the point where it will severely damage aquatic life and could provoke limits on recreational activities in and on our lakes, with a corresponding impact on property values and the local economy. In August we started the Indian River and Lakes Water Project (IRLWP) to take on this long term, multifaceted issue and it is making encouraging progress. April Frederick, our full-time staff person, and an experienced trained naturalist, started last May and has really accelerated progress in our national



Eastern Phoebe chicks. photo by: A. Frederick

accreditation preparation and education and communication efforts.

We trust that you, our IRLC members, supporters, donors, volunteers and friends also believe in the phrase "If it is to be, it is up to us". Your encouragement, ideas, commitment of volunteer time and financial support have been critical to your Land Trust's growth and past successes, and you will be a crucial driver of IRLC's ability to Enhance, Care For and Enjoy This Special Place to Love, Forever.

As the memories of our long winter give way to the invigorating warmth of spring and as we begin in earnest to plan for the upcoming summer, I personally ask that you consider how you can best support the crucial IRLC activities that are helping sustain this place we all love. Especially, I ask that you consider a generous contribution to IRLC's 2015 Annual Fund Appeal, which has the goal of raising \$50,000 this year. Your gift now will play a crucial role in IRLC's ability to carry forward its commitment in the coming year to improving the water quality of our lakes, enhancing public access to its lands, and ensuring the ability of future generations to enjoy this special place forever.



*Rose pogonia near Marc AF Baker
Island Preserve. photo by: M. Scarlett*

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How Phosphorus Became a Lake Problem

by: April Frederick

During the past several years we have witnessed a dramatic increase in algae blooms, including toxic blue-green algae, and weed problems on lakes throughout the northeast. Algae blooms occur when excess nutrients, mainly phosphorous and nitrates, enter the water from a variety of sources such as our septic tanks, fertilizer runoff from lawns and gardens, and nutrient rich water from farm fields and pastures. However, what many people don't realize is that the products we use to keep our homes clean might also be contributing to the problem.

Soap is a long molecule with a split personality. One end of the molecule is attracted to water and the other end is repelled by water but attracted to oil and grease. The detergent's water-hating side connects to oil and grease while the water-loving side links to water molecules, loosening dirt so that it can be washed away. Mineral ions, like those found in hard water, can clog up the oil attracting side of the soap molecule and cause it to drop out of the solution as soap scum. Phosphates assist detergents by binding up mineral ions, thereby keeping them from attaching to the soap.

Soon after World War II, soap manufacturers began to develop synthetic

detergents that contained builder substances like phosphates, in part to combat poor cleaning performance in areas with hard water. By 1959, essentially all laundry detergents sold in the U.S. were 30%-50% phosphates. Because wastewater treatment systems cannot effectively eliminate phosphates, this increased the amount of phosphorous entering U.S. water bodies.

As fresh water lakes naturally receive phosphorous and other nutrients from rainfall and runoff, plants become more productive. By this natural process, called eutrophication, a lake will eventually fill in transitioning over thousands of years from open water to bog to dry land. By the late 1960s, it was clear that the nation's lakes and streams were becoming more and more polluted, accelerating the natural eutrophication process. In response, municipalities and some states began limiting phosphate content in laundry detergents in the early 1970s. In 1993, the U.S. completely banned the use of phosphates in consumer laundry detergents. In 2010, many states, including New York, also banned the use of phosphates in automatic dishwashing detergents. However, phosphates can still be found in a host of products from tub and tile cleaner to toothpaste.

Let's be Phosphate Free

by: Barb Cottle

You can reduce the amount of phosphorus released from your home. Look for products that say they are phosphate free. Be sure to read the labels for everything you purchase, or call the manufacturer if you are unsure. I have tried these and find them acceptable:

AUTOMATIC DISH SOAP: Mrs.Meyers packets, Finish Quantum, Cascade Complete All-in-one packs, Seventh Generation, Method

MANUAL DISH LIQUID: Kirkland Signature environmentally responsible liquid dish Soap(Costco),Dawn Ultra, Gain liquid, Palmolive liquid.

SHAMPOOS/CONDITIONERS: One'n Only Argan Oil (Sally Beauty), Moroccan Oil (ULTA), Free & Clear(Walgreens), Orlando Pita Argan Gloss Shampoo (Costco).

BAR SOAPS: Zumbar goat's milk soap, Nature by Canus goat's milk soap, Neutrogena, Ivory

GENERAL CLEANING: Murphy's Oil soap, Vinegar, Baking soda, Murphy All Purpose cleaner, other cleaners by Seventh Generation, Method, Mrs.Meyers (all from Target)

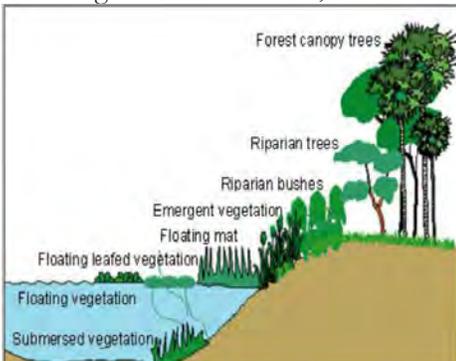
Please share your experiences using Phosphate Free products with your neighbors, friends and family. It's our responsibility to protect our lakes for our enjoyment and for future generations.

Buffer Zones: Maximizing the Potential of Your Lakefront Property

I am going to ask you to do me a favor... sit back and imagine the perfect lakefront view. Sunshine, a nice breeze, maybe some birds chirping. Now, how many trees or plants do you see along the shoreline? My guess is that most people would imagine the perfect lakefront to be void of shoreline vegetation. However, I am here to convince you otherwise. A buffer zone is an area of shoreline with planted grasses, shrubs, or trees that serves to separate the lake water from a lakefront property. This area is also known as the riparian zone. While these zones might seem like an obstruction to your view, they actually provide many valuable services which will ultimately keep your lake in a favored state.

Riparian zone

The riparian zone of a lake is the interface between land and water and is where a buffer zone should be installed. A perfect buffer zone would reach as far as possible from the water's edge toward your building, but ideally would be about 30 feet wide and extend the length of the shoreline. The riparian zone serves two major functions WHEN vegetation is present: the reduction of surface water runoff, which carries nutrients and pollutants, and the protection of banks from erosion. A vegetated riparian zone will act to buffer runoff water from big rain events or snowmelt, reducing the amount of nutrients and pollutants that would otherwise make it into the lake water. Once these compounds get into the lake, a number of things can happen including more turbid water, increased



An ideal riparian and lake habitat.
Image from: www.orangesenquak.com

potential for nuisance plant and algae growth, and increased sediment loads. A vegetated buffer zone along the shoreline will also help prevent erosion by holding sediment in place and protecting the shoreline from wind and wave action. When shoreline banks are eroded, more sediment is added to the water, which can increase turbidity as well as create environmental conditions that allow certain invasive plants, such as Eurasian watermilfoil, to thrive.

Additional benefits of buffer zones

Some buffer zone plants, due to their root structure and other characteristics, have the ability to consume nutrients already in the lake. Buffer zones also provide food, water, shelter and nesting sites for a wide variety of wildlife that are pleasant to observe. Shoreline vegetation can also improve fish habitat by reducing fine sediments and cooling summer water temperatures.



A lakefront cottage with vegetated buffer strip.
Image from: www.lakegeorgeassociation.org

With careful planning, it is possible to develop a lakefront view that is both aesthetically pleasing to you and beneficial to wildlife and water quality.

Growing your own buffer zone

When designing a buffer zone, variety is the key. Be sure to include trees, shrubs *and* grasses, not just one of these types of plants. Trees take up the most nutrients while also stabilizing the shoreline and attracting birds. Unmown grasses (not your typical lawn!) slow down the speed of surface runoff. Once the water settles, the grass can then use the runoff water, and all the nutrients it carried, to grow. Shrubs

by Luke Gervase, SUNY
Oneonta Biological Field Station

stand in the middle ground. Like grasses, they act to reduce the impacts of surface runoff and can stabilize shorelines as well as many trees. Where wind and waves are an issue, trees and shrubs are the most suitable choice for stabilizing topsoil along the shore. Where runoff water high in nutrients and pollutants is an issue, a mix of grasses and shrubs is the best approach. Native plants are always preferable because they are adapted to your climate and are more attractive to wildlife. The easiest way to grow your own buffer strip is simply to stop mowing your lawn! By letting part of your yard grow naturally, you permit native species to colonize the area and reduce the cost of a buffer strip project. Consulting a professional can help you to make wise choices for the most effective and attractive buffer strip.

If you wish to contribute to the state of your lake in a positive manner, installing a buffer zone is a very efficient and beneficial way to do so. Studies have shown that buffer strips substantially improve water quality by reducing nutrient loaded surface runoff and stabilizing shoreline soils. Now, imagine your lakefront view anew with a beautifully vegetated buffer strip. Grasses wave softly in the breeze, birds flit to and from new nests, kids catch fish in crystal clear waters. You can easily create a vegetated buffer strip that will serve all of the benefits mentioned here while providing recreational opportunities and increasing the aesthetic value of your lakefront property.



Buffer strips can add beauty and value to your landscape. Image from: www.hrwc.org

Water Quality is a Key Concern for IRLC

by Ed Robertson

The Indian River Lakes are all at various trophic stages. Excessive loading of phosphorous (P) during the warm, algae and weed growing, cottage season is expediting the eutrophication process of the lakes.

Some of the lakes are sick and in the warm season are vomiting toxic blue-green algal blooms. This trend is dangerous and is becoming a clear threat to the natural functions of the lakes, the fish population and the public. This deterioration will impact public health, public use of the lakes and lake water and eventually even the economic viability of the communities around the lakes.

IRLC is evaluating many small and some large (and expensive) fixes to accomplish the primary goal to significantly reduce the load of phosphorous going into the recreational waters of the Indian River Watershed.

What the Water Project is doing:

Evaluating all possible phosphorous sources and remedies

- Looking at the waste-water treatment plants in the watershed and all other non-point sources.
- Researching small "cluster" municipal systems, non-water based sanitary waste systems and any other on-site systems that retain the nutrients in residential sanitary waste and prevent them from reaching our recreational waters.
- Promoting the growth of waterfront buffers to absorb and consume the P from run-off before it can reach the lakes.
- Evaluating and promoting improved grey-water systems to treat waste water from sinks, showers, etc. for cottages using composting toilets where an effective alternative system is not feasible.
- Planning to look at well water in the area and to start monitoring the quality of the drinking water being pumped from the water-table.

Raising awareness and involving all local stakeholders while broadly reaching out for knowledge and assistance

- Developing a collaborative educational program designed to help us all understand the root causes of the problem and to start implementing effective remedies.
- Preparing a communication and educational outreach program to keep conversations going about the GOAL and effective short and long-term plans and strategies to accomplish it.
- Crafting a Community Outreach/Public Participation Plan in preparation of an Indian River Watershed Management/Action Plan.

We will need volunteers to fill many roles that will be required to:

- Do water sampling and analysis
- Work with municipal officials and boards
- Communicate with and assist lake associations
- Put together workshops on growing buffer zones and on alternative systems, composting toilets and improved grey water systems
- Coordinate with soil and water conservation districts and state agencies to prepare and execute a community outreach/public participation plan in preparation of an Indian River Watershed Management/Action Plan
- Prepare applications for and manage grants
- There will be many more as yet unidentified tasks for volunteers

Yes, there is a lot to do. It will be challenging, fun and probably frustrating at times. There should be plenty of milestones along the way to celebrate.

The fundamental flaw in the whole century old "system" is that the soils around the lakes are generally, with few exceptions, not suitable for septic systems. Yet almost all of us are still using some sort or another of a "septic system".

Our goal is to understand what will work here, around the Indian River Lakes, and then find ways to help people implement those solutions.

Continuing with the status quo will lead to a very unpleasant dead-end.

All of us stakeholders have too much invested, not just in our love of the place but in cottages, homes and businesses, to continue to contaminate the water that brings us all together here.

Walter Dutcher recently quoted Henry David Thoreau: "A lake is a landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It's earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature."

It is time for us to engage our better nature and start working to solve our problem. Please contact April Frederick or Ed Robertson and tell us how you would like to help!



Reflections on Grass Lake photo by: M. Scarlett

New IRLC Properties for Education & Protection

by Dani Baker
& Mark Scarlett

Education is the goal for Redwood Hill Preserve

The Redwood Hill Project Planning Team is hard at work developing a plan for the 51 acre wooded parcel on Stine Road generously donated to the IRLC by the Hillback family late last year.

The project will include a cottage-like community environmental education center with universally accessible parking to accommodate cars and buses, and an accessible trail leading to a platform with a panoramic view of Butterfield Lake. The building will include a large open multipurpose room with a kitchenette, small lab, wall displays and bathroom facilities. Outdoors will be a public picnic area, outdoor classroom space and interpretive signage.

A major feature of the project will be its focus on sustainable practices to conserve and improve water quality. Permeable surfaces, vegetated buffer strips and storm water run-off remediation are examples of features which will demonstrate best practices that can be incorporated in homes and cottages.

The team envisions a project that will provide the community with a unique venue. Some ways it could be used include kids' summer programs, environmental education and interpretive workshops, local artist exhibits and music performances, a speaker series, decision maker workshops for local government officials, green building/remodeling demonstrations, volunteer training, children's environmental lending library, scout badge programs, community group events and fund raisers.

As its plans develop the team welcomes input from IRLC members and the wider Indian River Lakes community and will be offering exciting opportunities for community members to invest in this unique community asset.

Protect • Learn • Enjoy • Forever

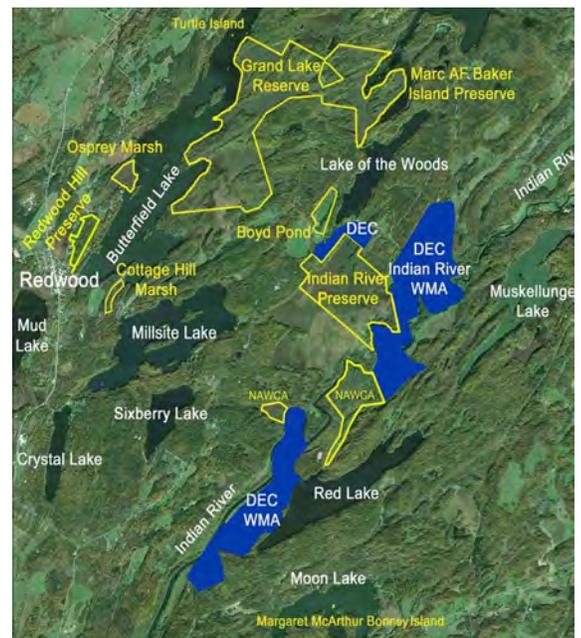


A scenic overlook from the top of this high bluff on the Redwood Hill Preserve will provide visitors with a dramatic view of Butterfield Lake. photo by M. Scarlett

Preserving Critical Wetlands on the Indian River

We are pleased to report that this January IRLC completed the purchase of two more high value wetlands on the Indian River, this time with funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act in partnership with the Thousand Islands Land Trust. One 153.8 acre parcel includes a 145 acre red maple swamp, .8 miles of shoreline on the Indian River, and wetland frontage on Red Lake. The other 28 acre parcel is almost entirely red maple swamp wetlands on the shore of the river. These new wetland parcels are combined with more than 350 acres on the Indian River acquired by IRLC in 2011 in partnership with Ducks Unlimited and funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Together with the adjacent DEC Indian River Wildlife Management Area, these new parcels create a preserve of more than 2500 acres of contiguous protected lands on the Indian River. Composed largely of marshland, shrub swamp, flood plain forest, and red maple-hardwood swamp, this extensive wetland complex will play a vital role not only as high quality habitat for migratory waterfowl and other

wildlife, but also for the crucial role that wetlands play in preserving and protecting water quality. With the Indian River providing a primary source of nutrients entering Black Lake, the largest of the Indian River Lakes, the conservation of water quality enhancing wetlands along the river takes on increasing significance. We are grateful for the support IRLC has received for this project, which is another important facet of IRLC's long term commitment to improving the water quality of our lakes.



IRLC properties, including the two new NAWCA acquisitions.

Lake Associations Make a Difference

By: Jim Ninos

Think about it! Have you ever been to a lake gathering with a bunch of your lake friends and family and this conversation comes up? “I wish we could do something about those _____ on the lake. Yea, I know what you mean. Yesterday _____ happened and nothing is being done.”

We all care about the lake! We believe it’s a special place on earth just for us. And we’re right! With that comes the responsibility to care for something that gives us so much pleasure. The lake can’t do it alone, and you can’t do it by yourself either. It takes a group of people with a passion for doing what is needed to protect your lake. The concerns may vary: new construction, water quality, noise, septic systems, fishing, swimming, boating. Whatever your reason, I’m sure there are others on the lake that want to do something about it, too. This is when someone steps up to bring people together in conversation.

There you go! You just took the first steps in starting a lake association. A lake association can accomplish many things that you can’t do on your own. Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” If you’re thinking that the DEC will step in before it’s too late, consider how many lakes and rivers there are in New

York State. The truth is, if you don’t take care of your lake no one else will. Your small group of committed lake citizens can make a difference on the lake.

Are you concerned about the water quality in your lake? Perhaps you have noticed a green slime on the surface of the lake and you’re afraid it might be a problem. You heard on the news that another lake had a problem that sounded just like this and the DEC has warned residents not to drink the water or swim in the lake. You’re not an environmentalist or a biologist, all you know is that it doesn’t look right. How can you find out if your lake has a water quality issue? Well, there are groups with answers that help lake associations. The New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA), founded in 1983 by a small consortium of NY lake associations, is a non-profit group comprised of lake managers, environmental organizations, consultants and other experts whose intention is to help lake associations help themselves with the right kind of advice. With the assistance of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), NYFOLA spearheaded the development of the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP). This nationally recognized volunteer lake monitoring program remains an



Lake residents at a meeting of the Grass Lake Association. Photo by: Jim Ninos

important part of NYSFOLA's mission. As a member of your association, you can take water samples from your lake every two weeks, from July to October, and have them analyzed by the DEC. Around March or April your lake association group will receive a detailed report that outlines what your samples have shown. The information is priceless and you can find answers that will help your lake. Each year in May, NYSFOLA holds a weekend conference with workshops and people that have experience with lake environments. The best part is that you meet people from other lakes who can give you great ideas for your lake.

For more information about starting a lake association, visit the NYSFOLA website (www.nysfola.org), click on the Membership tab and choose Forming and Managing a Lake Association. Contact IRLC to find out how we can help!

IRLC Hikes are a popular winter activity



Snowshoers explore Redwood Hill Preserve. photo by: A. Frederick

Hikers braved the cold to get outdoors with IRLC this winter. A crowd gathered at the new Redwood Hill Preserve with naturalist Kim Cullen for our annual snowshoe

outing in February. Participants saw many signs of winter animal activity before gathering around a warming fire. In April, Gerard Cole shared his knowledge of maple sugaring as we hiked through a light cover of snow to the ruins of an old sugar house along IRLC’s Grass Lake Overlook trail. Hikers were delighted to taste the maple sap dripping from a tap and learn about making syrup.

Are you interested in helping with summer programs or leading guided hikes? Contact April in the IRLC office to find out how!



Gerard Cole talks about maple sugaring. photo by: A. Frederick

Meet our New Board Members

Janice Douglass

Jan Douglass has been spending time on Millsite Lake all of her life. Her family purchased property in the early 1900s and built some of the first camps on the lake. As a child, Jan spent hours on the water swimming and fishing. She wandered the shores and woods, learning to identify plants and flowers and catching fireflies late into the night. She and her husband, Michael, enjoy kayaking the waters of Millsite Lake each summer.



"I am very interested in what is happening to the Lakes and what can be done to protect them. I am interested in the IRLC because once this generation is gone, what will be left for future generations? I can now feel comfortable knowing that many acres of land and water will be protected. As a member of the board of the IRLC, I hope to be able to offer my background as an environmental educator, and my interest in clean water related issues."

Richard Edgar

Dick Edgar was born in Alexandria Bay and grew up right here in Redwood, graduating from Redwood High School in 1964. After a stint as a Marine in Vietnam, he settled back in Jefferson County with his wife, Catherine. He graduated from Jefferson Community College and embarked upon a successful career in contracts administration,

at Fort Drum and then at Stebbins Engineering and Manufacturing Company. Richard is also a skilled woodworker who owned and operated a construction company responsible for building many beautiful homes and camps on the Indian River Lakes.



"I have lived in Redwood all of my life; from a youngster until present, I have had an enduring love of this area; fished the lakes and hunted in the surrounding woodlands and marshes. Now is the time for me to give back; and the IRLC is just one of the many ways I feel I can do this!"

Rich LeClerc

Although Rich LeClerc grew up in a large city in Connecticut, his Quebec-born father worked hard to ensure that the family could spend summers in their cottage along the shores of a small lake. Rich and his wife, Monica, moved to their small farm in Alexandria Bay in 1991 where they and their three daughters enjoyed fishing and



swimming in the local waters. They purchased property on Sixberry Lake, so close to home that they are able to enjoy time on the lake with family and friends all year long.

"We are thrilled to be able to enjoy, and do our small part to enhance, The Camp and the natural beauty that it provides. We hope you, too, can share in that enjoyment! That enjoyment could be enhanced by getting more involved in both your own Lake Association and the Indian River Lakes Conservancy, as we did. We would love to have you join the team!"

Jim Ninos

Jim Ninos has been spending time on Indian River Lakes, mainly Mukellunge, Grass and Black Lakes, since he was a child. Each year his parents brought the family up to spend a week fishing, swimming and jumping off the cliffs. In 1993, he and his wife, Karrie, bought the cottage on Grass Lake where he had spent his childhood summers.

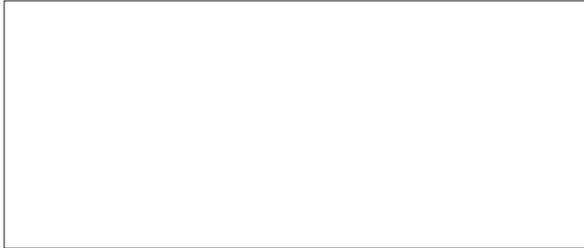


"The lake has been a passion of mine and I have spent a great deal of time working to preserve the beauty and environmental quality of the lake. Two years ago I was introduced to the Indian River Lakes Conservancy which helped our lake with a management plan. This year I was elected to the board of directors. This has provided me with a wider perspective of the area and the environmental impact that each of the 18 lakes are going through."

The mission of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy is to preserve the natural character of the area, with a focus on protecting clean water, fish and wildlife, and the scenic vistas along the shores of the lakes and the Indian River and to educate ourselves and the community about the natural habitat in which we live.

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Permit #50



or CURRENT RESIDENT

Save the Dates

June 27 Annual Meeting 10:00am

Join us at IRLC's new Redwood Hill Preserve to learn about the exciting plans for this new property. Local plein-air painters will be on hand as we hike the newly established trails and preview the location for IRLC's new environmental education center. The artists' works will be auctioned at the Celebration of the Lakes.

June 27 Well & Septic Workshop 1:00pm

This important workshop will provide homeowners with helpful tips for properly maintaining wells and septic systems.

Aug 4 Hyde Lake Geology Paddle 5:00pm

Join us for an evening paddle on beautiful Hyde Lake. We'll learn about the lake's geology as we float past tall bluffs and rock outcroppings.

Aug 8 Celebration of the Lakes 5:00pm

IRLC's annual picnic is sure to be a hit this year! Bring your friends and family to Coyote Moon Vineyard for an evening of great food, wine, music and fun!

Oct 17 Falling Leaves Hike 1:00pm

Enjoy the crisp fall weather on this annual IRLC outing

New events may be added as opportunities arise. Don't miss a single IRLC event - make sure you're on our email list by sending a note to IndianRiverLakes@gmail.com with the words Join List in the subject line.



Join the conversation on Facebook

Type "Indian River Lakes Conservancy" in the Facebook search box, or follow the link on our website.

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