

# Friends of Missisquoi Bay



SPRING NEWSLETTER  
April 2008

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**Friends of Missisquoi Bay . . . . . What are we doing, what are we planning to do? What's the big problem, anyway?**

**Here is the gonna-do list :**

**We want to clean up Missisquoi Bay---** we aim to do this by cleaning up the water coming into the Bay, by removing the two Causeways, and by increasing the FMB membership, so that we can be even more persuasive.

We are working toward this Goal by gaining a better understanding of what is causing the poor water quality in Missisquoi Bay and its tributaries. We put our knowledge into action, and we aim to focus our activities. We work with many groups and agencies to make progress, because nobody can do this alone.

Friends of Missisquoi Bay will continue to be a leader in **Northern Waters Partners**, a group of seven local citizen organizations, all working for improved water quality in Northern Lake Champlain. We know that there is strength in teamwork and strength in numbers.

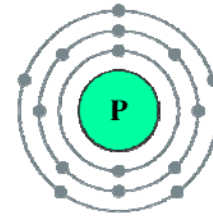
We will work with the Agency of Natural Resources to try to prohibit any additional phosphorus loading from **municipal sewer plants** in the watershed. We will work with local towns and the **Better Back Roads** program to reduce pollution caused by excess sedimentation and phosphorus loading.

We continue to work closely with the **Farmers Watershed Alliance** and the **Agency of Agriculture**. We are working to find funding for improved agronomic practices that will reduce manure run-off and erosion.

We will improve our media efforts to describe **residential practices** that will reduce the amount of phosphorus and sediment entering our waterways.

Working with Tom Torti of the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce and Ruth Wallman of Lake Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce, we are exploring the **Economic Impact** of Northern Lake Champlain. Does it make a difference if the water is clean or dirty? You bet it does. Vermont can't have a green economy in the happy green valley when the Lake is green with toxic algae.

**Plenty to do !! Please contact us at FMB for more details.**



## So, what's the Problem?

**Phosphorus.** Phosphorus is a chemical element. It is a component of DNA, and is an essential element for all living cells and all known forms of life.

But . . . . . Too much phosphorus causes algal blooms and eutrophication. Eutrophication is defined as a process where water is enriched in excess nutrients that stimulate the growth of aquatic plant life, usually resulting in depletion of dissolved oxygen. Bad for fish, bad for most animals, bad for most plants. Too much phosphorus causes poor water quality. Water pollution.

**Where does it come from?** Phosphorus is found dissolved in water, but it also readily attaches to soil particles. Thus, erosion is one of the prime causes of phosphorus and sediment loading in our watershed. Other sources are excess or mis-applied manure; nutrient-rich water from around barnyards; municipal sewage plants; malfunctioning residential septic systems; town roads, city streets and parking lots; dishwasher soap; lawn fertilizer; and so on.

## Been doing and are doing:

Friends of Missisquoi Bay raised private dollars to help create the **Farmers Watershed Alliance**, a local organization that is receiving statewide recognition for its work on water quality, and for its work showing the connections between healthy agriculture and clean water.

In **Northern Waters Partners**, we have been working with the following five local organizations:

- Farmers Watershed Alliance
- Franklin Watershed Committee
- Missisquoi River Basin Association
- Northern Lake Champlain Citizen Advisory Council
- St. Albans Area Watershed Association

We now welcome Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge to the Northern Waters Partners, making us a group of seven. We also have been working with the Quebec group, Conservation Baie Missisquoi.

We've "strongly encouraged" the **Agency of Natural Resources and the Agency of Agriculture** to work together on cleaning up the water that flows into Missisquoi Bay. Until recently, employees in each Agency didn't know what was going on in the other Agency. We hope to see full cooperation, from top to bottom. More work to be done here!

We testified before the **House Ag Committee, Senate Ag Committee, and Senate Natural Resources Committee**, and are working with the leadership of each committee. House Natural Resources Committee is next. We are determined to have the people in Montpelier hear about our Bay and Northern Lake Champlain, and the need to solve the problems here.

There is much more, contact us for details.

## What we are doing on May 24<sup>th</sup>:

On Thursday, May 24<sup>th</sup> Friends of Missisquoi Bay and the Tyler Place will hold their **4<sup>th</sup> annual Working Dinner Meeting**, at the Tyler Place.

We will hear from:

- Roger Albee**, the new Secretary of Agriculture;
- George Crombie**, the new Secretary of ANR;
- Judy Doerner**, State Conservationist for USDA;
- Roger Rainville**, Farmers Watershed Alliance

In addition, S.T. Griswold, Inc will display their pervious concrete product, designed to reduce stormwater runoff by putting rainwater back into the ground.

And there will be a **silent auction**: participants can bid on twenty wonderful items donated by our supporters. There is an open sheet of paper, and the bidders write their bids down. They can return and bid as often as they like. The more the merrier.

Items include:

- Bass fishing trip, by Gilbert Gagne
- Gift certificate to Chow Bella
- Two day canoe trip, overnight in log cabin
- Mozart Festival, two tickets
- Two handcrafted pack baskets
- Plus gifts and gift certificates from: Hamlen's, Champlain Country Club, Jeff's Seafood, Maplefields, and more. Details at the auction.

All who receive this newsletter received an invitation to this Event. Please **RSVP** to Pixley at 527-8326 or [pixley@tylerplace.com](mailto:pixley@tylerplace.com) or to [pmadden@together.net](mailto:pmadden@together.net)

## Getting Buffered:

One of the most effective ways to reduce the amount of sediment and phosphorus that enter the waters of Vermont is to have a buffer strip between waterways and cropped farm fields. These buffers act as a filter for excess nutrients and also help to prevent stream bank erosion. Since April 2006, all farms are required to comply with Accepted Agricultural Practices, with the following rules being most relevant to water quality:

- \* A buffer zone of perennial vegetation shall be maintained between annual croplands and the top of the bank of adjoining surface waters. These annual crops are usually corn or soybeans.
- \* Surface water is defined as being all rivers, streams, brooks, lakes, ponds, reservoirs and all bodies of surface water, artificial or natural. This does not include drainage ditches that carry water intermittently.
- \* This buffer is to be a minimum of 10' wide, measured from the top of the stream bank.
- \* Where there are concentrations of water flowing into a waterway, the buffer must be 25' wide.
- \* No manure may be applied within the buffer area.
- \* No tillage shall occur in the buffer area, but the area may be harvested as a perennial crop (such as hay).
- \* **If you have questions, please call the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets.**

## Residential Buffering and More:

**Details for Residential Practices will be in the summer newsletter, in late July.**



## Causeways and Turtles:

We have pieces of new information about the Causeways, and things are progressing slowly forward. Please recall that this is a two-part issue, because water-flow out of Missisquoi Bay is stifled by both Carry Bay Causeway and Missisquoi Bay Causeway. In order for water to flow freely out of Missisquoi Bay, both causeways must come out.

**For the Carry Bay Causeway:** The contract for the “Wind and Wave” studies was awarded in November 2006, and this is one of the final permitting steps leading to removal- which would still be two years away.

**For Missisquoi Bay Causeway:** The Grand Opening of the New Bridge is June 1, 2007. It is anticipated that the old bridge and 330' of the Causeway will be removed in August 2007, and this will make for a total opening in the causeway of 900 feet. What will remain will be 3,400 feet of Causeway to plug up Missisquoi Bay, causing disruptions to the natural water flow of northern Lake Champlain, and affecting almost all plants and animals in the Bay. It just ain't natural.

Meanwhile, we are waiting for the **Spiny Softshell Turtle Recovery Plan** as it slowly moves toward completion. Action on Causeway removal waits on this plan. It is being written by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and is undergoing various stages of internal review. We expect that by mid-summer the Plan will be published for Public Review, and it is important that we contribute our statements at that time.

We will provide updates and information so that FMB members can be sure that their voices are heard. We will have about a one-month window of opportunity to submit statements.

**It is important to remember that removing the Causeways is only a piece of the puzzle- it is even more important to reduce the phosphorus and sediment coming into the Bay and into the Lake.**



**Fundraising:** Please send donations to Terry O'Brien, with checks payable to Friends of Missisquoi Bay. **FMB is a 501 (c)3 organization, and gifts are tax exempt.** Private dollars provide special muscle and extra leverage in the work to clean up Missisquoi Bay and Northern Lake Champlain.

**Newsletter:** This newsletter is an abbreviated copy of information that we would like to provide. If you wish to have more information, please contact us.

**Membership Development:** We now have over **550 members** and we want to increase our membership. As part of this we are setting up "Neighborhood Groups." If you have ideas for membership development, please contact us.

**Friends of Missisquoi Bay has put a spotlight on the problems in the Bay and the Northern Lake. Because citizens and citizens groups raise their voices, the governor and the legislators and the agencies are paying much more attention.**

## CONTACTS:

**Fundraising:** Please send donations to Terry O'Brien, payable to Friends of Missisquoi Bay, at PO Box 91, Highgate Springs, Vermont 05460.

**Newsletter:** For suggestions, information or more copies, please contact Pixley Hill or Paul Madden, PO Box 91, Highgate Springs, Vermont, 05460

**Membership:** Please contact Pixley Hill or Betty Hagedorn, PO Box 91, Highgate Springs, VT. Or contact Betty at: [mailbhvt-fmb@yahoo.com](mailto:mailbhvt-fmb@yahoo.com)

**Anything at all:** Information, suggestions, volunteers: please contact Pixley Hill or Paul Madden, PO Box 91, Highgate Springs, Vermont, 05460

**E-mail:** Pixley Hill at: [pixleyhill@comcast.net](mailto:pixleyhill@comcast.net)  
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