

2026 Spring/Summer



The MONITOR

The Newsletter of the Newfound Lake Region Association

In this edition:

A Water Quality Update

Planting for the Future at Grey Rocks

New Programs for Adults

And More!

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OUR MISSION

NLRA protects and improves the health of the Newfound Lake Watershed. We support ecosystem resilience and natural resource conservation through focused programs and community engagement.

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At the Newfound Lake Region Association, this season feels both energizing and consequential. We are entering an important new chapter guided by a recently adopted five-year strategic plan—one that expands environmental monitoring, strengthens land conservation and pollution prevention, deepens community engagement, and ensures long-term organizational sustainability. Protecting and improving the health of the Newfound Lake Watershed requires consistent data collection, strong partnerships, and an informed public willing to act. Our plan reflects both the emerging challenges before us and the enduring responsibility we share to safeguard and strengthen this remarkable ecosystem.

Newfound remains exceptionally clean and healthy, but it is not immune to change. In recent years, we have closely tracked the water quality impacts of drought, intense storms, and shifting seasonal patterns. Most notably, the recent detection of the invasive zooplankton spiny water flea is a reminder that aquatic invasive species are an ever-present threat. Our response centers on rigorous monitoring, science-based decision-making, and robust public education to prevent further spread and protect the lake's ecological resilience.

At the same time, we continue to grow the Grey Rocks Conservation Center as a hub for conservation and education. Through expanded programming, strengthened school partnerships, and modeling best practices in property stewardship, Grey Rocks demonstrates how individual and collective actions can contribute to a healthier, more sustainable watershed.

The challenges ahead are real, but so is this community's commitment to stewardship. Together, we will continue to lead with science, invest in education, and take proactive steps to ensure the Newfound Lake Watershed not only remains protected, but thrives for generations to come. Thank you for being part of this work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Hanson".

Rebecca Hanson
Executive Director
Rebecca@NewfoundLake.org



2025 ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

2025 was a transformative year for the Newfound Lake Region Association. With the opening of the Grey Rocks Conservation Center and expanded watershed programs, our community made meaningful strides in protecting Newfound Lake.


50+
free
community
programs




150
classroom
visits and
field trips




1,000+
visitors at
the
Grey Rocks
Conservation Center



1,800
boats inspected
to stop aquatic
invasive species



100%
of Newfound's
shoreline surveyed for
aquatic invasive plants



25
stormwater
controls installed to
stop pollution



1,200+
members and donors



1,100+
volunteer hours
and
130 volunteers



A New Home for Conservation

In July of 2025 we opened the Grey Rocks Conservation Center, a hub for watershed science, education, and community engagement.



Addressing a New Threat

The invasive zooplankton spiny water flea was discovered in Newfound Lake in September. NLRA expanded monitoring efforts to study the impact of this new invasive species.



Photo: Bill O'Neill, University of Wisconsin Sea Grant



Read the Full Report

Scan the code with your phone's camera, or visit NewfoundLake.org/annual-report. To request a print copy, email Audrey@NewfoundLake.org.

Reading the Water:

What Drought and a New Invasive Species Mean for Newfound Lake

WATER QUALITY AT A GLANCE

- Overall lake water quality improved in 2025.
- Severe drought in 2025 stressed stream ecosystems.
- The invasive zooplankton, spiny water flea, was discovered in Newfound Lake.
- Newfound Lake remains free of invasive aquatic plants.
- No harmful cyanobacteria blooms occurred in 2025.
- Expanded protection efforts are critical to maintain Newfound Lake's high water quality into the future.

On a calm summer morning, Newfound Lake can feel almost impossibly clear. From a dock or drifting kayak, you can often see more than twenty feet down, past glints of sunlight and small fish weaving through the water, deep into the lake's cool depths.

That remarkable clarity is the result of a watershed that still functions largely as nature intended: forests that filter rain, streams that carry cold clean water downhill, and a community that works to protect what makes Newfound special.

Each year, Newfound Lake Region Association volunteers and staff collect thousands of measurements from the lake and the streams that feed it. These numbers reveal patterns that aren't always visible from the surface—and what needs to change to keep the lake healthy.

Over the past year, two stories have emerged from these data. One began with an unprecedented drought across New Hampshire. The other with the arrival of a nearly invisible invader. Both offer important clues about how the lake is changing, and how the choices made across the watershed will shape its future.

When the Rain Doesn't Fall

The summer of 2025 was the driest on record in New Hampshire. From June through August only 6.6 inches of rain fell compared to the 12.6 inches we'd normally expect based on the local 30-year average. Drought is often discussed in terms of water shortages, but it can also change the quality of the water that remains. For deep lakes like Newfound, dry conditions can sometimes bring short-term improvements in water quality. With less rain washing across the landscape, less pollution is carried into the lake.

That pattern appeared in several of NLRA's monitoring results last year. After the intense storm events of 2023 sent pulses of sediment and nutrients into the lake, the drier conditions of the past two years appear to have given Newfound a chance to recover.

But the lake only tells part of the story.

Newfound's famous clarity doesn't begin in the lake—it begins miles upstream in the forests and streams of the watershed.

The Streams that Feed the Lake

Newfound Lake is part of 61,157-acre watershed, with more than 136 miles of perennial streams that deliver over three-quarters of the lake's water. NLRA's volunteer tributary monitors keep watch over these streams. In 2025 alone, they made more than 1,500 observations across 35 monitoring sites. Their data show that while lakes may briefly benefit from drought, streams often struggle.

As water levels drop, shallow pools warm quickly and lose dissolved oxygen. These conditions can stress fish, aquatic insects, and other species that depend on cold, well-

oxygenated water. Reduced flows can also concentrate nutrients and pollutants, pushing them to levels that strain the ecosystem.

Over time, repeated stress can weaken stream systems. When heavy rains eventually return, as they always do, those weakened channels are more likely to carry pollutants into the lake. It's a reminder that Newfound's famous clarity begins far upstream. The health of the lake depends on the health of the streams and the landscapes that feed it.

A Tiny Invader Arrives

Last September, monitoring efforts revealed another change beneath the surface: the presence of spiny water flea (*Bythotrephes longimanus*). Despite its name, this invasive isn't actually a flea. It's a tiny zooplankton, barely visible to the naked eye, but capable of reshaping aquatic food webs.

Spiny water flea prey on native zooplankton, tiny drifting animals that form the base of the aquatic food web. Native zooplankton help keep algae growth in check and serve as an important food source for young fish. When spiny water flea populations grow, they can disrupt that balance, reducing native zooplankton and altering how energy moves through the lake's food web.

NLRA is working with state and university partners to better understand what this new arrival may mean for Newfound. Expanded plankton monitoring in the coming years will help track how the lake's microscopic community responds.

Protecting a Resilient Lake

Challenges like drought and invasive species can feel daunting. But one lesson from decades of monitoring is clear: resilient ecosystems are built, and protected, through the small actions of many people. Healthy forests, intact shorelines, and native vegetation help landscapes absorb rainfall, filter runoff, and maintain steady stream flows. Even small actions like planting native species, reducing lawn watering, and protecting natural shoreline buffers, can help strengthen these systems.

Preventing the spread of invasive species is just as important. Now that spiny water flea has arrived in Newfound, residents and visitors share a responsibility to keep it from spreading to other lakes. This summer, Lake Hosts at boat launches will educate boaters and anglers about this new threat, reminding them to clean, drain, and dry boats, fishing gear, and recreational equipment before leaving the lake.

While there is currently no way to remove spiny water flea once established, there are still ways to limit its impact. For decades, NLRA has worked to reduce nutrient and stormwater pollution entering the lake. These efforts keep algae growth low and help support a balanced aquatic ecosystem—and they matter now more than ever.

Because protecting Newfound Lake isn't a single action. It's the result of thousands of small decisions made by residents, visitors, volunteers, and communities across the watershed. And together, those choices help ensure that on future summer mornings, the lake will still look just as clear.



Rooted in the Future: Growing Resilience at Grey Rocks

On a visit to the Grey Rocks Conservation Center, you'll find people connecting with the landscape in different ways throughout the year: families enjoying the picnic area, students doing research, and visitors gathering for guided programs. Since opening its doors last July, the Center has quickly become a place where curiosity meets stewardship—a hub for learning about the lake and how to care for it. Now, as we head into our first full spring season, the landscape itself is becoming part of that story.

This year, NLRA is building on years of work to establish native plants across Grey Rocks with a new series of native plant gardens. It's an effort that is as much about function as it is about beauty. The gardens are designed to slow down and filter rainwater as part of our goal for the conservation center to be stormwater neutral. As an added bonus, we're creating diverse habitat for wildlife.

Designing for Stormwater

Every time it rains, water flows over rooftops, compacted soils, and parking areas, picking up sediment and pollutants along the way. If left unmanaged, that polluted runoff reaches our streams, rivers, and lakes, carrying contaminants that threaten water clarity and ecosystem health.

From the earliest stages of planning the Conservation Center, stormwater management was a central consideration. Part of our work to protect the watershed includes helping

homeowners manage stormwater on their property, and we want to lead by example, with Grey Rocks serving as a model of sustainable development and stormwater management. The landscape is designed to capture and infiltrate rain where it falls. Instead of channeling water away as quickly as possible, we're slowing it down and giving it time to soak into the ground naturally.

This spring's native plant installations are a key part of that system. Vegetated swales and strategically planted beds will intercept runoff from roofs and walkways, allowing water to filter through layers of soil and roots before recharging the groundwater below.

Why Native Plants Matter

At the heart of this effort are native plants. Native species have evolved here over thousands of years, forming deep relationships with the soil, climate, and wildlife of the Newfound Watershed. Unlike many ornamental plants, native species are uniquely adapted to local conditions. Their root systems often grow deeper and broader, helping to stabilize soil, absorb more water, and increase the ground's capacity to infiltrate rainfall. This makes them especially effective in managing stormwater.

The benefits of native plants extend beyond stormwater management. They provide essential habitat and food for pollinators like bees and butterflies, as well as birds and other

wildlife. Many native insects can only eat native plants, meaning that without those plants, entire links in the food web begin to disappear. By choosing native species, we're planting a garden that builds and sustains critical ecological relationships.

A Landscape That Teaches

As these gardens grow in, they will serve as living examples for the community. One of the goals at Grey Rocks is to make conservation visible and accessible. By showcasing native plantings in a variety of settings—from formal garden beds to naturalized areas—we hope to inspire visitors to think differently about their own landscapes. What if a portion of your lawn became a pollinator garden? What if the edge of your driveway helped filter runoff instead of sending it downhill?

Small changes, multiplied across the watershed, can have a profound impact on the health of Newfound Lake. Not sure where to start? We can help! Find resources at NewfoundLake.org/small-scale-stormwater.

Growing Forward

The work happening this spring is the next step in our efforts to bring ecological function to the property. Since the property was first donated to us, community volunteers have helped establish extensive habitat restoration work. As the Conservation Center completes its first full year, the landscape will continue to evolve, guided by the same principles that shaped the building itself: respect for natural systems, thoughtful design, and a commitment to protecting the natural resources we all share. In time, these gardens will mature, roots will deepen, and wildlife will return in greater numbers. Rain that once rushed across hard surfaces will slow, settle, and sink into the ground.

And visitors, whether they come to learn, explore, or simply enjoy the view, will be part of a place that's putting conservation into practice. Because at Grey Rocks, the future of the lake isn't just something we study, it's something we grow.

Plants with a Purpose

Across Grey Rocks, visitors can find a diverse palette of native plants taking root, each selected for its ecological value, resilience, and seasonal beauty. Here are some examples:

Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

With its vibrant orange flowers, butterfly weed is a magnet for pollinators and a critical host plant for monarch butterflies. Its deep taproot also helps it thrive in dry, sandy soils.

Blue Flag Iris (*Iris versicolor*)

Often found along wetland edges, this striking purple iris is well-suited for rain gardens, where it helps absorb excess water while providing early-season nectar for pollinators.

Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)

A native grass with deep, fibrous roots, switchgrass is excellent for stabilizing soil and improving infiltration. It feeds caterpillars and serves as nesting material for birds during the growing months, and its seeds are eaten by birds in the winter. It's airy seed heads add movement and texture to gardens well into winter.

New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)

Blooming late in the season, this vibrant purple aster provides food for caterpillars and is a crucial nectar source for pollinators preparing for winter.



New Adult Programs Ignite Exploration at Grey Rocks



NLRA invites adults to explore the Newfound Watershed in new ways, from discussing conservation research over coffee to digging into hands-on field science.

Grey Rocks has long been a place to experience nature outdoors, from kayaking and fishing to walking the trails. Now, with a full-time presence at the Grey Rocks Conservation Center, NLRA is creating new opportunities for adults to gather, learn, and explore the Newfound Watershed together.

Coffee, Cookies, and Conservation

It's late morning at Grey Rocks as a small group settles into cozy chairs with mugs of coffee and a plate of cookies. They lean over maps showing where migrating monarch butterflies are now. Someone expresses amazement at how scientists can track such tiny creatures across thousands of miles. The conversation moves easily from curiosity to speculation to laughter. Before long, the group is deep in discussion about migration, science, technology, and the mysteries of the natural world.

This relaxed gathering is part of "Let's Talk Nature", a new program held monthly at the Grey Rocks Conservation Center. The informal series invites people to drop in and discuss recent conservation research. With coffee and cookies on hand, the group explores topics ranging from emerging technology used to track migrating monarchs to the surprising role beavers play in supporting biodiversity. No specialized background is needed; curiosity is the only requirement.

These discussions draw a diverse crowd. At the session about monarch migration, one participant shared stories from their time as one of the first volunteers tracking monarchs in the 1970s. Another attendee is helping set up monarch tracking right here in New Hampshire using the newest technology. The organizer of New Hampshire's Monarch Festival was also in the room. Alongside them were neighbors who simply wanted to learn more about these remarkable butterflies. Around the circle, people with decades of experience and people encountering the topic for the first time shared stories, asked questions, and learned from one another.



Participants gather at the Grey Rocks Conservation Center for Let's Talk Nature, an informal monthly discussion series where community members and experts come together over coffee to explore conservation topics and learn from one another.

Why Should Kids Have All the Fun?

For those who prefer fresh air and muddy boots, NLRA offers hands-on opportunities to explore the watershed. The monthly "Field Trip for Grown Ups" invites participants to tap into the environment with a child's curiosity, stepping outside to experience the science of conservation firsthand. On a recent field trip, participants pushed soil corers into the ground to examine layers of soil and roots beneath the forest floor. During a winter field trip, they dug into the snowpack, identifying layers from different storms by texture and appearance, measuring the temperature gradient between the top and bottom of the snowpack. They tracked the movement of voles and other small mammals by finding their tunnels in the subnivean zone.

These field trips give adults the chance to experience the kind of hands-on science that NLRA brings to classrooms and youth programs throughout the watershed. Rather than simply hearing about conservation research, participants take part in the methods themselves, learning how scientists study soils, wildlife, and ecosystems.

Slowing Down and Noticing Nature

For those who enjoy a slower pace, "Discovery Walk with a Naturalist" offers another way to experience Grey Rocks. On these guided walks, the group moves along the trails together, pausing whenever something interesting appears. One day the group could find river otter tracks in the mud or fresh scratches on a tree left by a black bear. Another day they might see native orchids in bloom or a barred owl watching quietly from a branch overhead. The route matters less than the act of noticing. Time slows down, and the landscape reveals unexpected surprises.

A Hub for Community and Conservation

Some may prefer conversations over coffee. Others want to dig into the science or head out on the trail. Together, these programs reflect a simple idea: there are many ways to connect with nature. By expanding adult programming at Grey Rocks, NLRA hopes to welcome people with a wide range of interests and experiences into the shared effort of protecting the Newfound Watershed.



Education and Outreach Manager Mirka Zapletal shows off a fallen bird's nest found on the trails at Grey Rocks, a chance to turn a simple discovery into an opportunity to learn about wildlife and habitat.

A Legacy on the Lake: When Stewardship Becomes a Family Tradition



Milt Radimer helped launch the Newfound Lake Region Association's early water quality monitoring efforts in the 1980s, laying the foundation for the science-based lake protection work that continues today.



Members of the next generation of the Radimer family play along the shores of Newfound Lake, continuing a decades-long connection and carrying forward a legacy of stewardship.

For the Radimer family, Newfound Lake has been part of their story for generations. But it was Milt Radimer who transformed that love of the lake into action. In the 1980s, as development pressure around Newfound Lake increased, Milt was part of a new wave of conservation efforts. He brought fresh energy to the Newfound Lake Region Association, helping establish the organization's first Water Quality Committee and launch lake monitoring efforts that would become a cornerstone of NLRA's work to protect Newfound's exceptional water quality.

"He maintained annual calendars where his daily activities and thoughts were fully recorded," remembers his son-in-law Phil Harvey. "In addition to those calendars, he kept comprehensive daily weather data. From that interest in the environment—and his love of the lake—it seemed natural that he would jump at the opportunity to monitor the quality of the water."

Collecting data quickly became a family affair. "There were countless hours of water samples and Secchi disk testing," recalls his son Bob Radimer. "As unknowing young adults, we were less than thrilled about participating."

Milt's curiosity about the lake extended far beyond water sampling. He counted loons, tracked ice-in and ice-out, measured stream flows, and even conducted annual boat counts around the entire shoreline. "The least fun event," Bob remembers, "was driving very slowly around the entire shoreline over the course of two days counting every raft, motorboat, sailboat, and canoe."

Milt approached the work with the same enthusiasm he brought to everything else in life. His dedication helped establish a culture of volunteer monitoring that continues to guide NLRA's work today. In 2006, NLRA honored his contributions with its Founders Award, an award given in recognition of exemplary service or contribution to the conservation of the Newfound Watershed.

A Family Tradition of Conservation

That spirit of stewardship did not end with Milt. Since his passing in 2008, members of the Radimer family have continued the tradition of volunteerism he helped establish. Phil Harvey and Bob Radimer have both served as Weed Watchers, paddling Newfound's shoreline to look for invasive aquatic plants and help protect its waters. "The lake is in our family DNA," says Milt's son Rich Radimer. "We love it dearly and protect it fiercely." For Milt's daughter Sharon, that commitment carries special meaning. "I promised my dad that I would help protect our special place on Newfound," she says.

That sense of connection is already taking hold in the next generation. Children and grandchildren, many of whom have spent their summers on the lake, are developing their own deep ties to Newfound. As Bob shares, his sons will likely become the next caretakers of the family's property—continuing a tradition of stewardship rooted not only in enjoyment of the lake, but in a shared responsibility to protect it. The goal, he says, is to carry that ethic forward for generations to come, "teaching future family members to treat Newfound and its surroundings the way Milt has inspired us all to do, both physically and fiscally."

Looking Ahead

That sense of responsibility continues to shape the family's plans for the future. Rich Radimer and his wife Mary recently built on their family's legacy by joining NLRA's Clear Water Society, recognizing supporters who have included the organization in their will or estate plans. Rich says their decision to include NLRA in their long-term plans was simple. "We decided to join because Newfound needs us. Plain and simple. We'd love to have our legacy become contagious. I would tell anyone who has history on the Lake to leave something in their long-term plans to the NLRA. If you've enjoyed the Lake in your lifetime, if you have history here or have fond memories of summers on the Lake, you need to budget some of your legacy to Newfound. She's earned it." It's a sentiment rooted in decades of stewardship. What began with one person's willingness to act has become a family tradition—one that ensures the lake they love will remain protected for generations to come.



*"Newfound needs us. Plain and simple."
-Rich Radimer, NLRA Clear Water Society member*

Trouble Takes Root

A closer look at the plants quietly reshaping the watershed's shorelines.

Protecting Newfound Lake's exceptional water quality depends on preventing aquatic invasive plants like variable milfoil from taking hold. But land-based invasives also threaten watershed health by destabilizing shorelines, increasing erosion, and degrading habitat.

Volunteer Blake Robbins is leading a new effort to map two of the most aggressive terrestrial invaders: Japanese knotweed and Asiatic bittersweet. Paddling mile by mile along Newfound Lake's shoreline and up sections of the Fowler and Cockermonth Rivers, he has documented more than 100 established sites, creating a clearer picture of the scope of the problem.

Read Blake's firsthand account, explore maps of known infestations, and find resources to help identify and manage terrestrial invasives on your property in this full online article: NewfoundLake.org/post/newfound-terrestrial-invasive-plants



Scan this code with your phone's camera to read the online article.



Newfound Lake Region Association
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THIS SUMMER AT GREY ROCKS

FEATURED EVENTS



Volunteer Info Fair
June 5 • 4-6pm



Caterpillar Lab
July 15 • 11am-3pm



NLRA Annual Meeting
June 27 • 9-11am

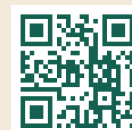


Weed Stampede
August 15 & 16 • 8-11am

ONGOING PROGRAMS

Guided Discovery Walks - Mondays
Kids' Nature Activities and Crafts - Thursdays
Summer Speaker Series - Weekly (dates vary)
Let's Talk Nature Discussion Group - Monthly
Field Trips for Grown Ups - Monthly

Scan with your
phone's camera to see
all upcoming events!



Explore the full schedule & sign up: NewfoundLake.org/events