



Photo by: Meijissa Foss



SUMMER/FALL 2021

# SEBAGO IN DEPTH

Water, Land, Community

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# HOOKED ON SEBAGO

Fishing Tips for Beginners to Experts



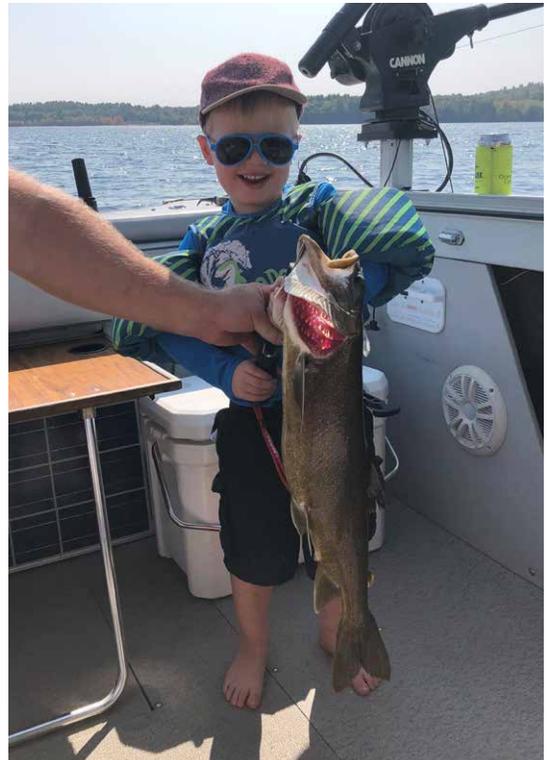
By Chad Thompson

From fishing the backwaters with a bobber and worm to trolling for voracious lake trout and the highly prized landlocked salmon, Sebago Lake has it all.

## FISHING FROM SHORE

While the sheer size of Sebago Lake begs for a boat, having one isn't necessary for a fun and successful day of fishing. For warmwater fish including largemouth and smallmouth bass, pickerel, perch, and crappie, sidle up to a protected shoreline, backwater inlet, or rocky jetty. Look for cover like downed trees, aquatic vegetation, and rocks where fish like to take cover. Since Sebago Lake is so clear, fish like to hide in the shadows where they can seek shelter from the sun and the peering eyes of predators. Backwaters with dark bottoms offer camouflage for marauding fish, so many species of shallow warmwater fish prefer to spend their time there. For largemouth bass, yellow perch, pickerel, horn pout, and the occasional crappie, try areas like the backwaters of the Sebago Lake State Park, the Sticky River basin (accessible from the Portland Water District's Sebago Lake Land Reserve kiosk on Route 114 and the culvert on Smith Mill Road in Standish), and the north end of Sebago Cove at the little rest area off Lake House Road in Naples.

For live bait, fishermen use worms, night crawlers, or live shiners and keep a careful eye for when the bobber disappears or the line starts running away. Other great methods for virtually all of these fish are rubber worms, twister-tail soft baits, and spinners. For smallmouth bass, try rocky shorelines like those found along





Raymond Neck that drop to 15 feet deep or more. Smallmouths love twist-tail or feathery jigs popped off the rocks along the bottom of an embankment. In the spring, soon after ice out, salmon and lake trout can also be taken from shore. The Town of Standish's dock at the end of Maple Street is a popular spot for fly-fishermen to cast streamers in hopes of catching a salmon or lake trout cruising the shoreline while the water is still cold. For fly fishermen willing to put on their waders, try casting from the sandbar at the mouth of the Songo River.

## FISHING FROM A BOAT

A boat really opens up the fishing options on Sebago. Bear in mind, going out on Sebago in a boat can be an adventure in itself due to the lake's large size and the potential for big waves to kick up in a hurry. If you are going to boat on Sebago, it's best to have a boat at least 16 feet long with relatively high sides or be sure to pick your day, or time of day, with low wind forecasted. For warmwater fishermen, a boat makes all the areas with the shoreline characteristics mentioned above accessible on the entire lake. Areas that have no easy shoreline access like the north end of Jordan Bay, the shallows around the Dingley Islands, and the north side of Spider Island become accessible for warmwater fish such as smallmouth bass. Warmwater fishermen

that have access to a boat should spend some time looking at fishing maps and exploring the sheltered coves, rocky outcrops, and backwaters with aquatic vegetation.

## LAKE TROUT AND LANDLOCKED SALMON

Perhaps the most unique and renowned Sebago Lake fishing is the pursuit of the coldwater fish or, specifically, the landlocked salmon and lake trout. In the spring before the lake separates into temperature layers, the entire water column is cold and oxygen-rich. This makes fishing for salmon and lake trout relatively straight forward since these fish can be found from the surface all the way down to the bottom, and even very close to shore. While there are several tactics and tackle you can deploy, fishing for them can be achieved with a variety of methods: casting from shore, using a canoe or row boat, or any level of power boat. The most common springtime method is slow-trolling using sewn bait very slowly. Once the water warms up a bit, try trolling a little faster using streamer flies or artificial lures. Common tackle include: fly rods with floating or sinking line, spinning rods, or trolling rods with or without weighted line. Popular spots for spring fishing include the mouth of the Songo River west to the mouth of the Muddy River and south to the mouth of the Northwest River. Many anglers launch their boat at the Sebago Lake State Park and start trolling at the mouth of the Songo.

Once the surface waters warm and the lake stratifies, the need to get your tackle into the deeper, colder water becomes almost essential for coldwater fishing success. Many anglers use weighted line to get their lures and bait to the fish. Other tactics include the use of downriggers but they are specialty equipment and can be a hefty investment for the occasional angler. Lures such as the Mooselook Wobbler, Speedy Shiner, DB

Smelts, and other flashy spoons that imitate wounded minnows are commonly used at or near the thermocline (layer between the upper, warmer water and lower, colder water) for salmon, and flatfish trolled very close to the bottom work well for lake trout. A good thing to remember when trolling is fish can see up but not down. For lake trout sitting on the bottom, the more you hit them in the nose with the lure or bait the more fish you will catch.

## FISHERIES CONSIDERATIONS

Due to an overabundance of lake trout, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is encouraging anglers to harvest as many legal lake trout as they catch, so get creative. Try out new recipes (I hear they are really good when smoked, or chunked and deep fried in beer batter), find friends who want to eat them, give them to food banks, or even add them to the compost in your garden.

*Chad Thompson is the source protection coordinator at the Portland Water District. He can be reached at [cthompson@pwd.org](mailto:cthompson@pwd.org)*

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## Northern pike

were illegally introduced to the lake in the early 2000s and are now established. If you catch one, make sure to remove it as it doesn't belong in the lake. These apex predators threaten the native salmon fishery and can disrupt the entire fish community.

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Paul Robichaud,  
Stream Explorers volunteer

# PROFILE OF A SEBAGO PROTECTOR

**Bill Keller**  
Stream Explorers volunteer

*Stream Explorers is a citizen science volunteer program. Portland Water District is partnering with Maine Audubon, Lakes Environmental Association, and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to recruit, train, and support volunteers who will sample streams in the Sebago Lake Watershed for aquatic insects that are indicators of water quality.*

## Q: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO VOLUNTEER WITH THE STREAM EXPLORERS PROGRAM?

A: As a former biology teacher I was excited when I heard of this opportunity to take part in actual field research instead of just teaching about it. I invited my neighbor, Paul, an avid outdoorsman and fly fisherman who became keenly interested in learning more about the kind of organisms that inhabit the streams he fishes and how they are indicators of the quality of water.

## Q: HOW DO YOU THINK STREAM SURVEYS HELP OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WATER QUALITY IN THE SEBAGO LAKE WATERSHED?

A: We have learned the presence or absence of certain organisms are indicators of their environment and the quality of that environment. By sampling organisms in stream environments, scientists can better understand the quality of the water. This is so important because Sebago Lake is not just a beautiful place in our state to enjoy, but also a very important resource to so many people.

## Q: WHAT DID YOU FIND DURING YOUR STREAM SURVEYS? ANYTHING UNEXPECTED?

We were so pleased to find so many organisms in such small samples of water. From the perspective of just walking by, one wouldn't realize how populated these streams are. Even in those streams that look to be not so nice or maybe not as clear, we found many organisms but perhaps a different kind of diversity that indicated the difference in water quality.

## Q: WHAT DID YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

Working with each other. The combination of scientist and sportsman made for some great times. We enjoyed getting out in the fresh air, learning about the biology and ecology of the creatures we found, and exploring nature in a more in-depth way.

## Q: WILL YOU BE PARTICIPATING AGAIN THIS YEAR? IF SO, DO YOU HAVE ANY GOALS FOR THIS YEAR'S STREAM EXPLORATIONS?

We look forward to studying new streams and becoming better able to identify the species without the need of the reference materials. We also look forward to returning to some of the streams we already sampled perhaps at a different time of the year. We are interested in seeing some of the collected data and learning what it is telling the scientists.

To learn more about the Stream Explorers program and become a volunteer, visit [maineaudubon.org/projects/stream-explorers/](http://maineaudubon.org/projects/stream-explorers/)



## WELCOMING A NEW PARTNER

Sebago Clean Waters is a partnership of non-profit organizations, including the Portland Water District, working together to conserve forests and ensure the long-term health and water quality of lakes in the Sebago Lake Watershed. Since 2000, the District has contributed towards the conservation of nearly 6,000 acres of forest.

This year the Mahoosuc Land Trust joined the partnership. Their service area includes parts of the Sebago Lake Watershed in Bethel, Albany TWP, Mason TWP, and Greenwood, and they recently identified the Crooked River as one key focus area for their work. Protecting forests in these areas will benefit residents, the Crooked River, and, ultimately, Sebago Lake and our drinking water customers.

Learn more about Mahoosuc Land Trust at [mahoosuc.org](http://mahoosuc.org) and Sebago Clean Waters at [sebagocleanwaters.org](http://sebagocleanwaters.org)



# WHAT'S MAKING WAVES: AROUND SEBAGO LAKE

## SEBAGO LAKE BUOY BACK ON THE WATER

In June the Sebago Lake Monitoring Buoy was returned to the lake where it began uploading water temperature, oxygen, and other data to the internet every 15 minutes. The District partnered with Saint Joseph's College and the University of Maine to purchase the buoy in 2017 in order to make real-time lake data available to scientists and the public. Data are available at [pwd.org/sebago-lake-monitoring-buoy](http://pwd.org/sebago-lake-monitoring-buoy) or on your mobile phone through the LIVE Datacenter app.

## SEBAGO LAKE LEVEL

After a lower than normal spring level, the Sebago Lake water level in mid-August was within the normal historical lake level range. Because the amount of rain and snowmelt varies annually, the actual lake level at any one time can't be predicted but can be compared to the average of previous years. It isn't uncommon for the lake level to be low over the winter and then "run up" in the spring with snow melt and spring rains. People often call the District to ask if the lake is lower or higher than is typical. However, the outlet dam is owned and controlled by SAPPI, and the amount of flow through the dam is regulated by their permit with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. For more information on lake level data visit: [pwd.org/sebago-lake-water-level](http://pwd.org/sebago-lake-water-level) and follow SAPPI's blog here: [presumpscotriver.tumblr.com/](http://presumpscotriver.tumblr.com/)

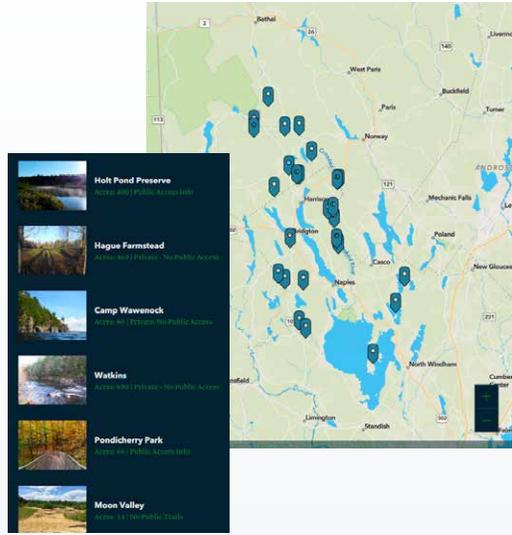
## BOATING IN LOWER BAY

The southern end of Sebago Lake, known as Lower Bay, is where the drinking water intake pipes are located. Years ago, the legislature established regulations to protect the water supply.

The No Trespassing Zone extends 3,000 feet around the intakes. No recreational boats are allowed, and the area is marked with buoys and strobe lights. The No Bodily Contact Zone extends two miles around the intakes and is marked with buoys. Boating is allowed but you may not swim or touch the water. Jet skis are not allowed in Lower Bay and should be used outside the 2-Mile No Bodily Contact Zone. The land around Lower Bay is mostly owned by the District to protect the water supply. The District-owned portion of the shoreline is designated no trespassing so avoid bringing your boat to shore.

## SEBAGO LAKE WATER TREATMENT FACILITY VIRTUAL TOUR

The District hosted two virtual tours of the SLWTF to celebrate National Drinking Water Week in early May. The tours were delivered to a high school audience and the general public and featured photos, videos, and a live discussion with District staff. To view the tour: <https://www.pwd.org/videos/sebago-lake-water-treatment-facility-virtual-tour-2021>



## EXPLORE ONLINE WITH STORYMAP: FOREVER FORESTS FOR SEBAGO LAKE

For over a decade, PWD has supported the purchase of forested land in the Sebago Lake Watershed. These forests filter the drinking water we provide to 200,000 Mainers in the Greater Portland area. Conserved lands also provide other benefits we can all enjoy, like hiking, birding, kayaking, and hunting. Explore PWD-supported conservation properties through our online "Forever Forests for Sebago Lake" StoryMap: [pwd.org/land-conservation](http://pwd.org/land-conservation)

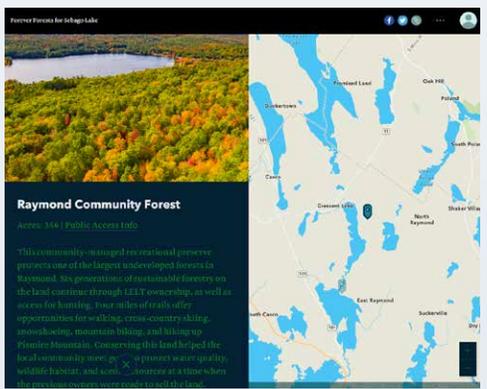




Photo by: Becky Thompson

# PREPARING FOR #2 SHOULD BE YOUR #1 PRIORITY



By Nate Whalen

When the pandemic drove us outdoors last summer, people took to the lakes in record numbers. Even before that, boating was becoming more and more popular. Many long time Sebago Lake residents can attest to the increase in boat traffic. It doesn't take long to realize that Sebago is a beautiful lake with clean, clear water. The beaches and sandbars are ideal spots for a refreshing swim and a great place to spend a sunny summer day. However, a day on the lake can have one problem - public restrooms accessible by boat are few and far between, so having to go number #2 can really cramp the experience if your boat doesn't have a head. If you have looked for a boat slip to rent, you know they are very hard to find. If you are lucky enough to get one, they generally don't come with public restroom access. So, what should you do if faced with this predicament?

Using the woods as a toilet is a bad idea. Not only is it trespassing, but fecal matter can have viruses and bacteria that get washed into the lake the next time it rains. High *E.coli* bacteria levels in the lake can close a public beach and ruin everyone's day. Even worse, they can make people very sick.

By planning ahead and preparing the head that fits your boating style, you'll be able to protect the lake and enjoy your day on the water.



Photo by: Graumann Summer

However, solutions do exist, ranging from simple and inexpensive to more complex and expensive options. Large boats generally have a “head” (or toilet) with an internal tank on board that can be pumped out at a marina. Smaller boats may have portable suitcase type toilets that get emptied after the day’s use. If you have one, be sure to perform yearly maintenance on the internal head, including checking all seals, clamps, hoses, pumps and valves. Mineral scale and/or rust tends to build up on moving parts during the off season. Cleaning and oiling them each spring is a good routine maintenance habit. Porta-potty type heads should be clean and loaded on the boat before heading out.

If you don’t have a head, a variety of portable toilets can be found online, or you can even make your own. An inexpensive option is to purchase a toilet seat made to snap on to a five gallon bucket with a secure lid. This type of homemade head can be used for boating or any other outdoor experience, like ice fishing or remote car camping.

By planning ahead and preparing the head that fits your boating style, you’ll be able to protect the lake and enjoy your day on the water.

*Nate Whalen is a water resources specialist at the Portland Water District. He can be reached at [nwhalen@pwd.org](mailto:nwhalen@pwd.org)*



## DISTRICT STAFF } PROFILE

**Scott Bickford**  
Water Treatment Plant Operator

Scott is one of nine water treatment plant operators that work at the Sebago Lake Water Treatment Facility, located in Standish near the lake’s Lower Bay. Treatment plant operators run and maintain equipment that treats drinking water 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Scott and the other licensed operators ensure water drawn from the lake is properly treated and safe before it travels in pipes to our customers. Scott’s favorite part of his job is interacting with coworkers to get the job done and talking to folks in the community about drinking water. Prior to working at the District, Scott knew the District as the organization that put up fences around Lower Bay. Through his work, he said he now understands the delicate balance of allowing recreation and using the lake as a drinking water source.

Scott’s connection to Sebago Lake doesn’t end with his job. He is an avid fisherman who has been fishing on and around Sebago Lake for over 25 years. The Maple Street pier and the trestle over the Sticky River are two of his favorite shoreline fishing spots. For nearly 20 years, he has enjoyed trolling and fishing from his boat in spots such as the Sticky River and around Indian and Spider islands. And Scott gets it just right when he says, “Sebago Lake is a gem to behold, and it’s great to use the lake for recreation and for it to be a drinking water source as well.” Sebago Lake is, in fact, unique in that it has outstanding water quality, is a public water supply, and supports recreational use.

When asked what he thinks the biggest threats to the lake are, he said pollution and runoff into the lake and tributaries, soil erosion on the shoreline, and development around the lake. Soil is the biggest pollutant of Maine lakes, but working together to keep soil on the land will help keep Sebago Lake a “gem to behold” for generations to come.

# SEBAGO LAKESCAPING

Improve your property and protect the lake!



## IS YOUR PROPERTY WITHIN 250 FEET OF SEBAGO LAKE OR ONE OF ITS TRIBUTARIES?

PWD provides free site visits and reports on how to make your property more attractive and lake friendly.

Private landowners may be eligible for a Lakescaping grant of up to \$1,000 (but no more than 50% of the total project cost).

Associations, municipalities, businesses, or other groups may be eligible for a matching grant of up to \$2,000.

If your property is within 250 feet of Sebago Lake or the Crooked River, Songo River, Muddy River, North West River, Panther Run, Rich Mill Outlet, Smith Mill, Sticky River, or Standish Brook contact us at [sebagolake@pwd.org](mailto:sebagolake@pwd.org) to set up a free consultation and get started!

## THESE LAKEFRONT PROPERTIES BECAME MORE BEAUTIFUL AND ACCESSIBLE WITH HELP FROM OUR LAKESCAPING PROGRAM.



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