

Highland Lake

Located in the Town of Winchester and adjacent to the City of Winsted, Highland Lake has provided over 150 years of exceptional recreational activities for local and state residents. It is a natural resource for the region providing recreation and nonrecreational uses and is a significant economic value to the Town. The lake now comprises 444 acres and contains two public beaches and a State-owned boat launch. Highland Lake is approximately three miles long and a half mile wide in Third Bay, the widest section of the lake, and is Connecticut's second largest lake. The surface is at 888 feet above sea level and is glacially formed with its deepest spot measured at 60 feet.

The first settlers in Winchester called it Long Lake. In 1771, a wooden dam was constructed by a mill owner and the level of the lake was raised four feet. In 1806 the dam gave way and was replaced with a stone and earthen dam that raised the level another foot. In 1860, Winsted was in need of a greater supply of water and the dam was raised to nine feet. In 1890, a tunnel was dug to draw additional water from the watershed, diverting water from the Mad River into Crystal Lake, where it flowed into Highland Lake. The original Long Lake had only one bay, but as a result of these changes, today Highland Lake has three bays.

At one time Highland Lake represented the only public water source for Winsted and now is one of Connecticut's finest lakes and an extremely valuable asset to Winchester. In addition to swimming and boating opportunities, the lake provides a superb fishing experience for both local residents and out of town fishermen. The Lake is defined as a Trophy Trout Lake and a Bass Management Lake by the State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The lake is stocked annually by the DEP and draws fishermen from other New England states.

Highland Lake has an outstanding advantage over other Connecticut lakes in the area due to its ample and fast moving water supply. Water enters Highland Lake from natural, underwater lake springs as well as being fed from many streams including Sucker Brook on the west side of the lake and Taylor Brook at the south end of the lake. Water flows out of the lake at the north end over a spillway which flows into the Mad River. The water then travels into the Still River, then into the Farmington River and eventually finds its way into Long Island Sound.

However Highland Lake also derives water from its large watershed of 3,808 acres, the land area that drains into any lake. Water quality is affected by the quality of the water that drains into the lake from precipitation. There are approximately 15 streams that contribute water and possible contaminants. The watershed surrounding the lake is similar to a bowl and any sediment that washes down the sides of the "bowl" eventually arrives in the lake and may affect the long term quality of the lake. It is for this reason that in the fall of 1989, the Highland Lake District was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission in order to control development and to protect the lake through stricter zoning regulations. Continuing to preserve open space and concern for preserving ridgelines are paramount to the long term viability of Highland Lake. The best protection for a lake is to maintain forested land on its watershed.

Lake residents have joined together to protect Highland Lake under the banner of the Highland Lake Watershed Association (HLWA), now in its 52nd year of working to preserve this marvelous lake for future generations. The nonprofit organization has continued to monitor changes in the chemical makeup of the lake and through this website will be able to communicate to the Winchester citizens, the

condition of the lake as well as upcoming lake events. For further information and more details, visit hlwa.org.

From April to October the HLWA takes measurements of temperature and chemical analysis readings of the lake water to monitor the condition of the lake.

Temperature

During July and August, water temperature ranges from approximately 75 – 82 degrees at the surface to 40 degrees at 60 feet below the surface.

Latest Analysis of the Water Quality

Water quality is good ranging between 10 and 15 feet visibility.

Upcoming Lake Events

Diquat Application – To be scheduled
Annual HLWA Meeting – July 9, 2011
Boat Parade – July 9, 2011
Picnic – July 10, 2011
Lake Drawdown – To be scheduled
Relays - September 10, 2011

Special Reminder

Boaters please remember there is a 6 mph speed limit from ½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise (and from 5 p.m. on Sundays from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day) 45 mph speed limit on weekends and holidays.