

Economic Facts

The environment and the economy are inextricably intertwined -- degrade one and the other will be degraded. We have a continually building body of evidence to this new understanding and here in Maine it is particularly important to our tourism economy and interior rural communities.

- ✦ Economic activity associated with Maine's lakes generates over \$1.2 billion dollars a year in direct expenditures with an economic multiplier that results in an impact of over \$2.8 billion a year. These natural resources provide employment for over 50,000 Maine people. In all, Maine lakes contribute to over 9% of Maine's GDP. (1)
- ✦ Water quality has a direct impact on the value of lakefront property values. A diminishment in water quality can affect the price of waterfront property ranging from \$11.00 per foot of frontage to \$200.00 per foot, depending on the location and community here in Maine. (2)
- ✦ If waterfront property becomes less valuable as a result of diminished water quality, a municipality can be faced with either cutting services OR shifting the tax burden onto non-waterfront property owners. In either case there are no winners.
- ✦ Lakefront landowners pay high property taxes. The majority of those tax dollars, in some communities as much as 74%, pays for local education. Water quality affects the quality of education for Maine children.
- ✦ Species of plants (3) that are not native [exotic] to North America are ruining water quality and recreational use of lakes....in Vermont certain lakes must be "mowed" in order for people to swim or use their boats in them. Home property values are devalued by an average of \$12,000 as homes become less desirable on infested lakes (4). Native vegetation is choked out, depleting food sources for fish and wildlife inhabiting the area. Sportsmen find the fishing less desirable and boaters find they can't enjoy "weed free" waters. It's a matter of time before the same thing happens in Maine lakes.

Compromising these freshwater resources, then, cannot be an option. The economy and the environment are mutually dependent. If one is degraded so is the other.

Maine does have many lakes, but the paradox of plenty is paucity of attention...and the State of Maine has been cyclical and inconsistent in its stewardship of these "... jewels of the first water..." as Thoreau has called Maine's lakes.

Through education MLCI seeks to sustain and nurture the health of Maine's lakes and the communities dependent upon them.

1 Great Ponds Play an Integral Role in Maine's Economy, Kevin Boyle, Jennifer Schuetz, and Jeffery S. Kahl, Water Research Institute, University of Maine, April 1997

2 Water Quality Affects Property Prices: A Case Study of Selected Maine Lakes. Holly J. Michael, Kevin J. Boyle, Roy Bouchard, University of Maine, Maine Agricultural and Forest Experimentation Station, Miscellaneous report 398, February 1996.

3 Eurasian milfoil

4 University of Maine study figures