



SUMMARY OF MERRYMEETING LAKE WATERSHED 2024 CONSERVATION, RECREATION, AND STEWARDSHIP SURVEY

OVERVIEW & METHODOLOGY

SELT (Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire) and the Merrymeeting Lake Association completed a public opinion survey between April 23 and May 29, 2024. This is not a statistically valid survey and is intended to inform SELT, the Birch Ridge Community Forest Management Committee, and the Merrymeeting Lake Association’s understanding of the greater community’s concerns, hopes, and desires for the region.

Surveys were mailed to all residents of New Durham and Middleton through the US Postal Service’s Every Door Direct Mail service, as well as to all New Durham property owners (total mailed 3,069). In addition, both organizations invited donors, members, and interested parties to participate via email notifications and an electronic link to the survey on SurveyMonkey.com.

255 responses were submitted; 157 online and 98 by mail, which were entered by SELT volunteers. Respondents could choose to skip questions, so the number of responses per question varies.

Survey respondents were asked to identify their living situation relative to Merrymeeting Lake (see question 12). 245 responses were received; 143 identified themselves as living on or owning property on Merrymeeting Lake and 72 as living year-round in New Durham. When observed, notable differences between the responses of these different segments of respondents are noted below.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Perhaps not surprisingly given the status of Merrymeeting Lake as one of the cleanest, if not the cleanest, lakes in New Hampshire, **the survey provides clear consensus that water quality is the highest priority of respondents - and should be used to guide conservation, recreation, and stewardship decisions.** Following closely, **wildlife ranked as the next highest priority across all areas.** **Water quality related issues** also ranked as the highest concern. Human activities – whether the frequency or speed of boating, commercialization, or light pollution formed the second tier of concerns. Most of the comments submitted related to boating on the lake.

Conservation: Geographically, at least 80+% of respondents identified **each of the remaining unconserved areas** – including Mt. Jesse and Mt. Bet - as important or very important for future conservation.

Recreation: Respondents provided clear direction that **existing trails should be maintained and improved** before new ones are established. The Birch Ridge Community Forest – established in 2019 – was by far the most widely and frequently visited property. Numerous respondents

requested **needed improvement of trail markings, signage, and maps**. Respondents also provided wide ranging comments on the condition of trails, reflecting different expectations, experiences, and trail conditions across the 20+ miles of available trails.

Stewardship: Respondents confirmed that **water quality and wildlife habitat are the highest priority** for the stewardship of existing conserved lands and the proposed addition of Mount Jesse. Submitted comments offered appreciation while highlighting conflicting opinions on recreational uses currently allowed, such as horses and snowmobiling, and those prohibited entirely, such as four wheelers (ATVs).

CONSERVATION

Q1: CONSERVATION GOALS

There is near universal agreement that Clean Water is the #1 reason for conserving land, with 95.29% of all respondents and 98.59% of MML resident/owner respondents saying it is “Very Important”.

The top three goals for land conservation are Clean Water/ Water Quality, followed by Healthy Wildlife Populations / Wildlife Habitat, and Sustainable Forestry.

- 98.82% of all respondents ranked Clean Water as “Important” or “Very Important”
- 96.37% of all respondents ranked Healthy Wildlife / Wildlife Habitat as “Important” or Very Important”
- 81.75% of all respondents ranked Sustainable Forestry as “Important” or Very Important”

A second tier of conservation goals are widely supported too. Scenic views, recreation and trails, connecting conserved lands, and climate resilience are ranked “important” or “very important” by over 70% of respondents. However, all had the highest rankings of “not important”, in the range of 7% to 10% of respondents.

Overall, there are **no notable differences in Conservation Goals** between the overall respondents and those that identified as living or owning property on Merrymeeting Lake.

However, **New Durham residents appear to place a higher importance on wildlife** than all respondents or the MML resident/owner cohort: 86.11% of New Durham respondents ranked Wildlife as “Very Important”, compared to 75.3% of all respondents and 66.9% of MML respondents.

New Durham residents were less concerned with secondary conservation goals of **scenic views, recreation and trails, connecting conserved lands, and climate resilience**, with 15 to 18% rating these goals as “not important”, twice the rate of all respondents.

Q2: GEOGRAPHIC CONSERVATION FOCUS

There is broad and deep support for continued conservation of all Merrymeeting Lake watershed areas identified in the survey. At least 85% of respondents ranked Mount Caverly, Mount Jesse, Pine Point Road / Lion's Camp Pride, and Mount Bet areas as "very important" or "important" for additional conservation work. The Devil's Den / Chesley Road received a similar show of support, with 76.31% identifying it as "very important" or "important".

Overall, there are **no notable differences in geographic areas** when reviewing all respondents versus New Durham or MML property owners/residents.

Q3: CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE WATERSHED

When thinking about the future of the Merrymeeting Lake watershed, **clean water is the highest concern for respondents**, with **93+%** saying they were "very concerned" or "concerned" about **degradation of water quality, invasive aquatic species, or cyanobacteria (blue-green algae)**. These concerns were followed closely by **development / loss of forestland (89.16%), shoreline erosion (83.87%), and over building of the shoreline (82.4%)**, which all affect water quality.

Results indicate that New Durham residents are extremely about both **over building of the shoreline** with 72.22% saying "very concerned", as compared to 51.1% of MML residents/property owners and 59.6% of all respondents. This result was mirrored when evaluating responses to **development / loss of forestland**.

A second tier of concerns was identified, related to human activity on the water and watershed, with **at least 64% of respondents** saying they were "very concerned" or "concerned" about **commercialization of trails (69.76%), speed /frequency of boating (69.08%), and light pollution (64.78%)**.

A third tier of concerns centered around **overdevelopment of trails, loss of community connection, short-term housing rentals, and housing costs**. Between 51% - 59% of respondents were "very concerned" or "concerned" with these topics, the lowest range of all topics.

RECREATION

Q4. FUTURE RECREATIONAL PRIORITIES

In regard to trail development, 74.5% of all respondents chose to "strongly agree" or "agree" with the statement "**Before creating new trails, SELT should focus on finishing and maintaining its current trail system on Birch Ridge, Mount Molly, and Mount Bet.**"

A trail system connecting the ridges and linking existing trails in the Merrymeeting Lake watershed was supported by 62.15% of respondents, but had the strongest level of disagreement, with 15% of respondents selecting "disagree" or "strongly disagree" and another 20% choosing "neutral".

An all-access trail at Birch Ridge Community Forest was supported by 58% of respondents, with 38% selecting “neutral”, indicating a need for more information before forming an opinion.

Overall, there are **no notable differences in future recreational priorities** when reviewing the responses from all respondents versus New Durham or MML property owners/residents.

Q5. PRIORITIES FOR TRAIL DESIGN, BUILDING, AND MAINTENANCE

Water and wildlife are the top priorities for trail design, building, and maintenance. More than 91% of respondents identified **maintain water quality, limit impact on wildlife habitat, and reduce soil erosion and water runoff** as “very important” or “Important”.

Impacts to abutters was a lone, secondary tier of importance, with 75.2% selecting “very important” or “Important”.

The next tier of priorities was centered on the user experience.

- **Off-street parking was identified as “very important” or “Important” by nearly 60% of respondents,** with a noted difference in importance between New Durham residents (63.38%) and MML owners/residents (54.67%).
- 53% of respondents feel it is “very important” or “Important” to **improve experience with signs / maps / kiosks.**
- More respondents would prefer to interpretive materials to focus on management activities, wildlife habitat, and scenic views (54%) rather than cultural/historic resources (40.8%)

Respondents showed no clear preference for **creating multi-use trails** and **creating use-specific / designated trails**, with just 44% indicating “very important” and “important” for each choice.

Q6. USE OF MERRYMEETING AREA CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC LANDS

This question gathered feedback on how often respondents used ten different publicly accessible lands and conservation properties open to the public.

The **Birch Ridge Community Forest** had the strongest level of engagement with the highest number of 10+ times visitors and the lowest number responding I have not visited. 71.06% of respondents visited Birch Ridge at least 1 time in the past year. **Mount Molly** was visited by 54.66% of respondents.

The least visited property was **Moose Mountains Reservation**, with 75% reporting they had never visited it.

In general, **MML residents/owners were less likely to have visited conservation properties** not associated or adjacent to the lake (such as Moose Mountains Reservation, Ellis Hatch Wildlife Mgt.

Area, and Cold Rain Pond). Not surprisingly, **more MML residents/owners (68.31%) reported never visiting the Town Beach** in the past year, as compared to New Durham residents (34.72%)

New Durham residents appear to be less familiar with Mount Molly – Collins Family Forest, with 51.39% reporting having never visited Mount Molly, compared to 37.32% of MML residents/owners. However, New Durham residents engage with the Birch Ridge Community Forest at a higher rate than MML residents/owners, perhaps due to its size and multiple access points and Corridor 22.

Q7: OBSTACLES OR CHALLENGES TO ENJOYING PROPERTIES

This was an open-ended, free response opportunity for respondents. 73 responses were submitted. All comments were reviewed and tagged with common terms to help group responses and observe trends. Comments can have multiple tags applied. See Appendix for all comments.

Tag	Number of Comments	Sample, Representative Comments
4-Wheelers	2	4x4's should be kept off all trails.
Biking	3	Being nearly run over by snowmachine, bike or ATV.
Boating	5	Boat traffic in the summer.
Commercialization	2	Too many two legged predators seeking to take advantage of conservation land for personal and/or financial gain.
Crowding	2	over use and over crowding by non-local people
Dogs	2	Too many dogs are off leash.
Hunting	5	As a hunter, I'm concerned by how many people hike without wearing orange during hunting season even when hiking with brown/white dogs. Perhaps there could be an educational sign at trailheads.
Litter	1	
No challenges	10	
Parking	11	Not enough parking for Mount Molly access in season
Signage	14	If you are not familiar with the area, more signage would be beneficial.
Snowmobiling	4	Emphasis is put on snowmachines. In light of Climate change and less snow it should be less of a priority.
Trails	23	It is very difficult to know where the trails are, entrances and exits, and to be able to access trail maps that are easy to find (the maps themselves) and to follow.
Water quality	4	Algae in the water making it unsafe to swim.

Q8: RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN MERRYMEETING WATERSHED

This was an open-ended, free response opportunity for respondents. 85 responses were submitted. All comments were reviewed and tagged with common terms to help group responses and observe trends. Comments can have multiple tags applied. See Appendix for all comments.

Tag	Number of Comments	Sample, Representative Comments
4-Wheelers	9	Wish that ATV privileges had not been removed.
Biking	5	I think everyone knows by now I'm a strong advocate for multi-use passive recreation trails, and that a good hiking trail isn't necessarily a good MTB trail. New trails need to be laid out for both whenever practical. CFF and Mt Bet area could also support a concentrated MTB trail network in proximity to the Merrymeeting CFF trailhead.
Blueberry Picking	2	
Boating	35	Wake boarding on lake is having an adverse effect on the shoreline and ability to enjoy the waterfront. This lake is too small for waheboarding.
Cabin	2	The Cabin is an absolute treasure/asset to the community.
Commercialization	10	We strongly oppose the commercialization and economic development of our pristine environment.
Conservation	5	I think the more conserved land the better, the nice part about the merrymeeting lake region is it's not over populated. You can enjoy the lake and surrounding land for family hiking, biking, and enjoying nature.
Horses	4	I wouldn't want horseback riding on the walking trails due to horse dung.
Hunting	4	Please protect hunting on these lands. I have spent my entire life in the woods, fishing, hunting, hiking, foraging, ect. My grandfather hunted these lands, my father hunted these lands, and now I enjoy hunting them with my daughters.
Parking	3	Off-street parking for trailheads is desirable for some trails but is not needed for all trails.
Signage	1	I recommended to the MMLA board the need for map of trails around the lake. It would be very helpful to explore all of the new resources to enjoy. Does SELT have these already? Put them on the MMLA website and give yourself credit.
Snowmobiling	6	I used more frequently to walk my dog in the winter than I would if I was concerned about snow mobiling traffic.
Trails	17	Trails are well maintained. Need well marked trails. More trails are needed. I don't agree with adding more trails, while the current ones are less than finished/easily traversed.

Water quality	6	The most important thing aside from water quality is paying consideration to year-round residents.
Wildlife	1	

STEWARDSHIP

Q9: MANAGEMENT GOALS FOR CONSERVED LANDS

Water quality again ranked as the top goal, with a resounding 90.69% of all respondents (95.77% of MML residents/owners) saying it was “very important” and 98.38% as “very important” or “important”. All remaining management goals were significantly less important, as compared to this goal.

Wildlife followed as the next most important management goal, with 77.73% identifying improve and diversify wildlife habitat as “very important” or “important”.

A wide swath of goals received between 58% and 64% of respondents identifying them as “very important” or “Important”, including **maintain / create scenic views, support public access for recreation, create wilderness areas with no management or trails, and establish pick your own blueberry barrens**.

Sustainable forestry to produce high quality wood products had the lowest response rate, with 46.75% saying it was “very important” or “important”.

Climate related goals provoked the highest levels of “Don’t Know”, with 9.39% (Supporting migration of plants and animals due to climate change) and 8.71% (Sequester carbon for climate mitigation) of all respondents selecting that option.

Blueberry picking, a historical land use on the ridges, had the strongest response indicating it was “not important”, with nearly 35% and just 8.54% saying it was “very important”, the lowest % ranking.

Q10: MANAGEMENT GOALS FOR THE ADDITION OF MOUNT JESSE

This question asked respondents to provide rankings as to the importance of specific management objectives related to the proposed acquisition of the 617-acre Mount Jesse.

Wildlife ranked as the most important management goal.

- 81.5% of respondents selected “very important” or “important” for **protecting rare natural communities and habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species**.
- 78.6% of respondents selected “very important” or “important” for the goal of **Protect the headwaters of Peters Brook (a trout stream)**.

The next tier of priority goals was **sustaining the scenic views of Mount Washington and Merrymeeting Lake** (64.5% selected “important” or “very important”) and a **trailhead and parking area on King’s Highway** (61.22%).

The largest area of uncertainty was regarding the statement **Continue Use of Corridor 22 trail for snowmobiling, hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding** with the highest portion of respondents choosing “Don’t know” (12.81%), while 53.3% of respondents see it as “important” or “very important”.

However, **creating new trails for hiking and mountain biking** was not seen as a high priority, with less than half (45.67%) choosing “important” or “very important).

Blueberry picking again received significantly less support, with 31.22% of all respondents saying it was “not important” and just 9.7% saying it was “very important”

Q11: MANAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP OF CONSERVED LAND

This was an open-ended, free response opportunity for respondents. 57 responses were submitted. All comments were reviewed and tagged with common terms to help group responses and observe trends. Comments can have multiple tags applied. See Appendix for all comments.

Tag	Number of Comments	Sample, Representative Comments
Appreciation	12	I am thrilled that this entire venture has been so successful.
4-Wheelers	7	It would be nice to see certain trails open to ATV/dual sport bikes. I have a concern about off highway recreational vehicles OHRV's. They rip up trails, and should be limited.
Commercialization	6	Protect, preserve, and conserve! This is about the future, not local business enterprises.
Conservation	6	It's important to keep as much land undeveloped for the future generations. Once it's developed it's gone!
Corridor 22	2	Corridor 22 should remain a winter trail and hiking.
Education	2	Nature education programs should be held.
Horses	4	Please keep trails open to the horseback riding. Just as people love to hike so don't we enjoy the woods on our horses.
Hunting	3	Please protect the hunting access.
Overnight Camping	2	Eventually, incorporate Lion's Pride facilities as overnight stop for through hiking, and cross country skiers.
Snowmobiling	3	
Water quality	6	Storm water management begins here. Maintenance of town roads and drainage systems is equally important or the efforts will be wasted.

Wildlife / Wilderness	10	Animals need a place where they're not disturbed. Set it aside for nature to exist without human interference. The less we do with the land the better.
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DEMOGRAPHICS

Q12: LIVING SITUATION

245 respondents answered this question

- The vast majority live or own property in New Durham: 87.8% of all respondents
 - Live on or own property on MML: 58.4% of all respondents
 - Live in New Durham: 29.4% of all respondents:
- Very few respondents live outside of New Durham but still in NH: 8.1% of all respondents
- Just 4.08% of respondents live out of state

Q13: AGE

237 respondents shared their age. The majority of respondents were of or approaching retirement age, with 77% of respondents 55 years or older. The 65-to-74-year cohort represented 37.1% of all respondents, the largest cohort.

Cohort	#	%
Under 18	0	0
18 to 24	1	0.42%
25 to 34	7	2.95%
35 to 44	17	7.17%
45 to 54	29	12.24%
55 to 64	62	26.16%
65 to 74	88	37.13%
75+	33	13.92%
Total	237	

Q14: OPTIONAL – NAME AND EMAIL

107 respondents provided an email address for notification of additional information on MML; all but one asked to keep their comments anonymous.

APPENDIX: UNEDITED COMMENTS

QUESTION 7: PLEASE SHARE ANY OBSTACLES OR CHALLENGES YOU HAVE OBSERVED OR INCURRED IN ENJOYING THE PROPERTIES IDENTIFIED IN QUESTION 6 ABOVE.

1. People littering.
2. Need better signage and trail markers
3. Parking for the boat launch
4. Need to recreate a previously existant walking trail (1970;s) from the most northerly point on North Shore Road (across from 195 N Shore Road) which is part of Collins SELT land. Otherwise all walkes further along the Nshore Rd need to walk up to the top of OWLS heade to the top of Owl Head, Trail follows Plelasant Brook and leads to Devil's Den via the small ponds at Class 6 Road.
5. parking
6. Plan to use all of the above, but current medical conditions are preventing it.
7. It is very difficult to know where the trails are, entrances and exits, and to be able to access trail maps that are easy to find (the maps themselves) and to follow. Also, there are a lot of ticks, so I worry about lyme disease.
8. None
9. I visited the Town Beach to see if the town did anything to open the catch basin at the beach so rain runoff could infiltrate into the ground,they had not despite the fact they had funds specifically to do this. I manned the Boat Host site weekly to prevent entry of milfoil and other exotics. I went to inspect the new parking area on North Shore Rd which opened Mt Molly and Devils Den. I took my grandchildren brook trout fishing 6 times last summer in MMRG,and the surrounding area including Beaver Brook. While I did not visit Cold Rain Pond or Ellis Hatch WMA last year I have visited these areas many times in the past to brook trout fish.
10. Poorly maintained trails
11. The PMSC has a real problem with connectivity between BRCF and “The Den”, as well as a lack of parking in The Den. SELT could definitely help with the latter.
12. I do not recall there being any issues or obstacles.
13. No Challenges
14. Mt. Bet trail is a disaster in terms of runoff and erosion. Trees knocked over and left with exposed roots. Shameful how that was done.
15. Not enough parking for Mount Molly access in season
16. None
17. I live on the lake so for the most part I do not need to access it from a public area. Would that said I would definitely like to make it a priority to get out and enjoy the existing trails.
18. More signage or trails to allow hiking from Camp Pride to Birch Ridge. Especially older trails or routes. Signage to Moose Mountain from Ellis Hatch Area.
19. None

20. One of the birch ridge trails is amazing and signage is great until about 1/4 of the mile back to the connecting trail. If my husband wasn't with my kids and I hiking we would have had to turn around and re hike the whole way back or call for help as we couldn't get through on our own. Very dangerous to have an unfinished trail at the end
21. There is no identifying map showing access to all these areas. So I only know the ones I am closest to
22. none
23. Re Birch Ridge, there is presently the problem that trail markers (e.g. on South Shore Road) are being removed. A general solution for all the trails would be to document on-line how to locate the trailheads.
24. No one checking boats when we have put our boat in. But since ours has never left Merrymeeting we are secure in knowing we are not transporting dangerous pests
25. Narrow turnaround for vehicles to back up and avoid portable toilets. Vehicles need to be able to pull in further off the road and to the left. But this may encroach on private property. Or allow vehicles to pull in off the street but closer to the street. I guess we need an engineer!
26. Although trails are identified in various maps, they are not apparent. I would like to see more access points to SELT lands off Birch Hill road. More priority given for hikers than snow mobiles and bikes.
27. n/a
28. not able to access during weekends, therefore, limited usage to mid-week opportunities
29. Parking
30. I was concerned only when I saw a man walking near the cabin with a long gun. Birch Ridge.
31. It's easy to get lost on the trails because there are so many intersections and the trails aren't well marked.
32. Cut trees down in front of scenic overlooks. Better marked trails.
33. Too many two legged predators seeking to take advantage of conservation land for personal and/or financial gain.
34. I am new to the area and have found most of these areas by chance while driving around. Finding these areas and parking is sometimes a challenge.
35. Hunting on the property, some people don't like hunters. Too many dogs are off leash.
36. Birch Ridge is great the way it is. Adding too many trails takes away from the "conservation" of the land, We appreciated the maintenance of the current trails and the expansion by buying new land. Conservation is meant to give nature a chance to exist without human conflict and interaction.
37. Trail maintenance a bit haphazard.
Maps do not seem to accurately reflect trails.
38. I have spent several years hunting and mountain biking Mount Molly and Mount Bet. I know the woods very well. One of the challenges I've faced in the last few years has been a commercialization of the lands. Local residents have taken it upon themselves to create large parking lots that on busy days have 2 or 3 cars in them. I fully support everyone having an opportunity to enjoy the land but its important for everyone to understand walking

designated hiking trails isn't the only recreation that's allowed. I often get a bad look while I'm hunting or driving those roads.

39. Birch Ridge trail markings were unclear
40. Coldrain pond has recently been reduced for dog walking access.
41. Boats not being checked for invasive plants at the launch before entry into water
42. I didn't know any of these recreation areas existed! I would love to visit now that I know. I moved to Middleton a few years ago.
43. Trails overgrown in some areas, trails not smooth for walking
44. If you are not familiar with the area, more signage would be beneficial.
45. Signage not available in some areas.
46. We have not run into any obstacles or challenges when visiting these properties.
47. I have not encountered any obstacles or challenges with my visits.
48. Being nearly run over by snowmachine, bike or ATV.
49. Too many people
50. Mt. Bet trails are very poorly designed in regards to rainwater/erosion management. 4x4's should be kept off all trails.
51. As a hunter, I'm concerned by how many people hike without wearing orange during hunting season even when hiking with brown/white dogs. Perhaps there could be an educational sign at trailheads.
52. Trail maintenance - overgrown
53. Boat traffic in the summer.
54. I have not really considered there being obstacles. Some of the trails are still a little rough but I always make sure I am wearing appropriate clothing and foot wear.
55. Not enough parking for boat trailer at Mount Molly launch.
56. Very concerned of how the water and rivers are being dumped on and in. To have Army Corp of Engineers - or someone help clean/dredge water ways to keep them flowing properly. Sad to see tires, trash and plastic that has been washed down these water ways.
57. Mount Bet needs access with off street parking on the far side of Owl's Head Top.
58. No obstacles/challenges. Love all the work put in to make areas accessible!
59. Not enough time in the week.
60. Too many saplings and small trees cut about 2-3 inches above the ground making them dangerous tripping hazards. Particularly bad on the section that starts on North Shore Road.
61. Signage
62. Parking spaces for Birch Ridge
Trail signage is too sparse.
63. over use and over crowding by non-local people
64. Washouts on trails
65. Gas powered blowers should not be allowed. The noise is a nuisance when try to relax.
66. We just moved to New Durham in September 2023 but plan to hike all trails in 2024 and visit each mountain.
67. Algae in the water making it unsafe to swim.

- 68. Concerned about building so many trails for the Town of New Durham. Emphasis is put on snowmachines. In light of Climate change and less snow it should be less of a priority.
- 69. I don't live there anymore, but I have a keen interest in what happens to the lake and its beautiful surroundings. Thank you for providing this survey.
- 70. Parking
Signage
- 71. No signage. trail not marked, overgrown.
Difficulty level not indicated
Hunters acting dangerously.
- 72. Boat wakes (wake boats) destroying shoreline
Wake waves limit enjoyment of water activities
- 73. Merrymeeting should have a 10 HP motor limit

QUESTION 8: PLEASE SHARE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ABOUT RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE MERRYMEETING LAKE WATERSHED.

- 1. Wish that ATV privileges had not been removed.
- 2. Any chance of a paved bike path?
- 3. MML itself centered on private ownership and boating.
Accessibility for public is a problem.
- 4. I hope to enjoy kayaking and hiking with our family soon.
- 5. Unchecked boating activity and seemingly rampant shoreline construction are contributing to an unprecedented amount of shoreline erosion and the degradation of water quality.
- 6. There are too many wake boats for this size lake.
- 7. There are too many wake boats on the lake, and the lake is significantly more wavy than it ever was. It's as bad as Winnepesauki some days.
- 8. It would be nice to see more of marine patrol on the water and less wake boats eroding the shoreline
- 9. Loon preservation is important — boater awareness. And consider banning wake boats due to shoreline erosion
- 10. Way too many Wake boats on Merrymeeting lake. This is causing erosion of the shoreline much faster than than anyone had ever thought possible.
- 11. Boat activity is really only from July 4 thru Labor Day, each year. The impact of wake surfing is overstated by those that don't wake surf. Too many people shoot off personal fireworks over the water. While there are state regulations about what you can do to the shoreline, enforcement is lax. There could be more outreach to those who live on the lake as to how best safeguard and preserve the watershed.
- 12. Since 2020 boating on MM has become unbearable. People have no concept of creating a wake that damages beach fronts. There has been dangerous activity and excessively loud music. We also have people who come in for the day and anchor - which is fine - but then

their drinking and loud partying make it impossible to enjoy being outside let alone use the beach We pay high taxes for.

13. I live in the lake and I'm concerned about the Wake boarding eroding our shoreline. Fisherman visiting, using head for fishing, smoking and throwing butts in the lake.
14. I am very concerned about the amount and speed of boat traffic on the lake. I would like residents to be more mindful about turning off lights at night to preserve the natural beauty of the night sky. Noisy small craft on the lake are a problem as is the speed of boat traffic near the shoreline. The lake should feel more serene than it does now.
15. I'm concerned about shore erosion and risks to boater safety because of wake surfing boats
16. Wakeboarding needs more restricted "no wake" areas and extended shoreline distances.
17. Increased short term rentals equal increased boating issues..we need better speed controls and observance of boating away from shoreline..everyone I know has > erosion in recent years
18. Make private fireworks illegal and regulate wake boats
19. Loved the Boat Parade, Ice cream Social and music on the lake.
20. No wake boarding on Merrymeeting Lake
21. Wake boarding on lake is having an adverse effect on the shoreline and ability to enjoy the waterfront. This lake is too small for waheboarding.
22. Too many boats on the lake. State laws for docks are being completely ignored (ie frontage required and crowding). Boats operating too close to shore
23. I don't like the boats that create waves. ait obviously destroys the shoreline.
24. I'm concerned about the wake surfing boats and the erosion of my shorefront.
25. limit speed of boats and proximity to shore
26. Please support banning of wake board boating! Significantly destroying shorelines.
27. I feel that the surf boats are eroding the shoreline. I wish there were more kiosks, information, etc, to make it easier for new visitors and novice hikers to enjoy the area. I live here and I can hardly figure out how to navigate the trails.
28. becoming over run with wake type boats
29. No jet skis
No minibikes/4 wheelers
No fires without permit
Day hikes only
parking registration pass(sticker system similar to White Mountain National Forest)
30. Wakeboard boats, especially those used commercially, are causing the need to repair shoreline walls.
31. The Town of New Durham should be strongly encouraged to enforce its zoning and planning board regulations! Virtually all of the property owners on MML DO NOT WANT continued commercialization and development, including but not limited to big ski boats, jet ski's, ADU's, Air BnB, and more than 1 1/2 story structures.
32. Please do not enlarge the parking areas. MML does not need more outside boats using the clean lake.

33. Why is horse-back riding desired on the conserved land? Have you ever walked on a trail frequented by horseback riders? This will impact trail use for other activity. How will it impact wildlife and plant habitat? The high wakes thrown up by wake boats impact the entire shoreline. Merrymeeting is so narrow that there is no safe distance from the shoreline that would not cause erosion. Moreover, wake boats may have filled up their tanks in another lake containing invasive species. Off-street parking for trailheads is desirable for some trails but is not needed for all trails.
34. Wake boats and huge motor boats are nightmares as are motorized trail vehicles of all kinds. Bass boats are an invasion of privacy.
35. The Cabin is an absolute treasure/asset to the community. Thanks you for it's year-round use. I intend to try some overnight star gazing - assuming light pollution from the lake shore is not an issue.
36. I do not want to see New Durham become a recreation destination location, as it is now the majority of the people that own properties on the lake are seasonal and they come to the lake as there destination to get away. We don't want it to become mini Winni.
37. We don't need anymore recreational activities in New Durham
38. We are concerned with the amount of truck traffic up and down North Shore Road. We like to walk the roads daily and the huge trucks make it feel like a very commercial area.
39. I think much thought should be given to what is the ultimate limit of use for MML
40. Commercial activities on SELT properties is against the interest of SELT and its current goals, as well as the interests of the Town. Public access from the end of N Shore Road to Middleton Road is badly needed for public safety especially those living there year round. Currently interent guidance for trucking arriving from the North East (i.e. Portland ME) is via Pine point Rd!
No person should profit from SELT.
41. We strongly oppose the commercialization and economic development of our pristine environment. Why would horses be allowed?
42. We truly appreciate the effort to conserve as much land as possible for our watershed.
43. I think the more conserved land the better, the nice part about the merrymeeting lake region is it's not over populated. You can enjoy the lake and surrounding land for family hiking, biking, and enjoying nature. The more populated it gets, the more it just turns into another safety concern especially on the lake with boats.
44. Very eager to had Mt. Jesse linked to Birch Ridge. Parking expansion for Mt. Molly
45. If the number oone priority of everyone is not to preserve the water quality of the lake, they do not belong here. It is what makes MML unique and the conserved land will help guarantee this into the future as long as all residents are responsible for not polluting the lake which means no use of lawn fertilizers with phosphorus, cleaning their septic tanks on a regular basis, cleaning their tank exit filter (if they have one) at least once a year, picking up their pets wastes and desposing it at the dump, optimizing their land adjacent to the lake to allow infiltration of runoff before entering the lake. Especially using hand tools to create rain gardens which do not require any permits.
46. Some concern about hunting with guns in these areas. Bow hunting OK.

47. Please protect hunting on these lands. I have spent my entire life in the woods, fishing, hunting, hiking, foraging, ect. My grandfather hunted these lands, my father hunted these lands, and now I enjoy hunting them with my daughters. People from out of state don't understand the heritage of hunting and I feel as if I'm being forced out of my own woods yet I'm probably more of a conservationist than most people I see in these lands. Please protect hunting on these lands and all other recreational activities as well. I've seen some of these trails getting posted to "foot traffic only" yet SELT does allow mountain bikes on some of these trails.
48. I recommended to the MMLA board the need for map of trails around the lake. It would be very helpful to explore all of the new resources to enjoy. Does SELT have these already? Put them on the MMLA website and give yourself credit.
49. Too many snow mobiles and ATVs, Horrible destruction in order to provide access!
50. Expanding snowmobile trails is a wonderful thing but also 4 x 4 trails it would be nice to have something that could accommodate a side-by-side perhaps up to 65 inches wide and it would be nice to have trails all around that area
51. More trails are needed. Wildlife use trails more than humans. Trails should be kept mowed as grass hold ticks. If possible a trail around the entire lake is needed for all activities.
52. Thank you for improving the view and the trails
53. Trails are well maintained.
54. Need well marked trails.
55. The committee meetings should be on zoom and notification of said meetings on line ahead of time.
I don't agree with adding more trails, while the current ones are less than finished/easily traversed. I don't mind "rough cuts" and having them identified as such. but there should be notice and advertising of a couple of SELT work days a year, grooming current trails. Lunch provided community effort.
56. Open more trails to motorized vehicle use (ATVs)
57. I think everyone knows by now I'm a strong advocate for multi-use passive recreation trails, and that a good hiking trail isn't necessarily a good MTB trail. New trails need to be laid out for both whenever practical. CFF and Mt Bet area could also support a concentrated MTB trail network in proximity to the Merrymeeting CFF trailhead.
58. Birch Ridge Community Forest seems to get regular use by the entire spectrum of recreational activities. While use seems steady it is not heavy by any measure. Visitors seem to be respectful of the cabin, signs, trails, etc. Very little trash is seen.
59. No one person should make money from trails.
60. The more you "create", the more erosion you will see.
No more trails - look at what's happening with Mount Major and all of the Appalachian trails. The hiking public does not respect the land as land owners do.
61. I am surprised to see what looks like a new road going up Birch Ridge.
It looks over done to me and unnecessary given what I thought the uses were going to be. It looks wide enough to drive a car on and although I haven't checked it out I am concerned about erosion.

62. We use the land on these properties almost daily by hunting, hiking and walking our dog. We also enjoy fishing in the area. The use and access to these properties greatly improves and makes a direct positive impact on our lives as local, year round community members. We have found in some areas, the use of mountain bikes erodes the trails more quickly. We enjoy both the well developed/maintained trails and forests that do not have marked trails.
63. The trails are great, though limiting trails to no horses can be difficult for riders (I myself) if trail heads are not labeled. Luckily, I am local and know what they are, but for visitors it may be difficult. I understand why some do not allow horses (i.e. rattlesnake) because they are narrow and winding for shared use.
64. Trail specific activities: I wouldn't want horseback riding on the walking trails due to horse dung.
65. Appreciate that there is a separate walking and snow mobiling trail at Birch Ridge, I used more frequently to walk my dog in the winter than I would if I was concerned about snow mobiling traffic.
66. Entire areas should be left to natural process as much as possible. Animals already have extensive trails everywhere. Beavers are managing erosion. Keep motorized traffic out.
67. It was a big disappointment when trails were closed to ATVs, especially as snowmobiling seems to be receding due to limited snow. The current shared area that was being managed by New Durham Valley ATV club did not have the issues that are commonly cited by snowmobile proponents. I thus wonder if its time to rethink/repurpose some of the trails, or create additional trails(dual purpose).
68. People should be prohibited from using fertilizer on lawns in the water shed.
69. Rapid increase in use, expansion and increased population on lake and surrounding area immediate threat to safety on and off lake without law/ safety enforcement present. Continuing pollution of lake via run off nutrients from septic and leaching fields out dated or not designed to handle use particularly during summer months. Inadequate and under funded inquiry and mitigation of septic and nutrient run off into lake.
70. Concerned about overbuilding and water quality. Use of fertilizers/pesticides, paved driveways, etc. as well as erosion caused by some boats.
71. The most important thing aside from water quality is paying consideration to year-round residents. I live on Pine Point Road and there are hunting lands that are already a bit close for comfort to our residential area so I would want to be very mindful about expanding hunting within a residential area.
72. I'd like to see open areas maintained (kept cleared), or enlarged, for field habitat. Old cellar holes and cemeteries identified, and, marked.
73. Blueberry picking!!!
74. no complaints.Noise pollution by organized multi-person activities.
75. Consider development of emergence year-round access to North Shore Rd. and to Middleton Road. It's needed badly - population growth and closures of N. Shore Road at Owl Head.

76. Fish and Game allows the lake water level to exceed full lake for an extended period. During these periods the lake shore suffers unnecessary erosion. Control of the water level needs to be returned to the dam bureau.
77. I enjoy ALL the recreational areas and look forward to exploring ones I am not as familiar with. Keep up the good work. There can't be enough open areas to enjoy.
78. See #3 Stewardship and land management
79. It's totally the best part of living here! A true gem for the entire state to preserve this lake that feeds into Winni.
80. n/a
81. This is a beautiful area and it's important to make it accessible to those who want to experience it so trespassing is minimized and people get access.
82. conservation is the priority vs recreational use
83. I'm good
84. Disc golf, an extremely environmentally friendly sport, was rejected on Birch Hill by short sighted self involved SELT managers. I will resume donations to SELT when they see their error on this issue
85. Picking wild berries.

QUESTION 11: PLEASE SHARE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ABOUT MANAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP OF CONSERVED LAND IN THE MERRYMEETING LAKE WATERSHED.

1. Such a great option for New Durham and beyond!
2. I am thrilled that this entire venture has been so successful. My grandparents had a camp on the lake for over fifty years, and my parents had one for twelve years. They would be so happy, as they loved the lake so very much. And I love it still and have wonderful memories.
3. As a lake home owner I have noted there is a small cadre of volunteers who improve the experience of our forest. Mike Gelanis is the hero for his tireless work to keep improving yet protecting the land and wildlife. SELT needs to let him lead trail development and maintenance. If we have more trails we will get more volunteers.
4. Thank you for all of your hard work to protect Merrymeeting lake for generations to enjoy in the future!
5. Thank you for all your efforts!
6. Thank you!
7. Thank you.
8. I think it's great what they have done and I'd like to see it continue to grow.
9. Doing a great job!
10. Many thanks for all your efforts to oversee this!
11. My family and I have owned and enjoyed a summer cottage on Merrymeeting Lake since 1955. The clear-cutting on Birch Ridge behind us caused significant erosion, undermining and collapsing the only access road and washing soil and rocks onto our property and into

our cottage and the lake. I would not want to see this happen to others. I applaud and have supported all the efforts of SELT and MMLA to protect and conserve the land and our pristine lake for future to generations to enjoy as we have done.

12. Protecting a clean water supply is most important-for us and for animals.
13. no one should profit from community trails at all
14. Protect, preserve, and conserve! This is about the future, not local business enterprises.
15. Focus I believe is conservation rather than recreation. I feel that general public often is naive to absolute risks to health of the lake. Those that may think they know are often biased by ideas of personal gain in some form or another. Why not “ develop “ anything that benefits man and give nature alone a safe space?
16. Avoid additional expansion of motorized vehicles on SELT trails (all seasons) except for maintenance and public safety.

Avoid additional expansion/commercialization of other species (i.e. dogs and horses) on SELT Trails.

Consider a few (3) survival lean-toos for trails exceeding 2 miles from public roads.

17. I strongly oppose the use of SELT properties for commercial based activities whether horse back riding, mountain biking or commercial sale of forested wood to third party organizations. Unless SELT is managing these activities to improve the conservation lands, none of these activities should be allowed for commercial uses.
18. It's important to keep as much land undeveloped for the future generations. Once it's developed it's gone!
19. Minimizing or eliminating development, farming, and industrial use is important
20. Any conserved land even with multiple uses and goals is better than developed land, especially at the rate housing developments in the area are occurring. Connecting the areas is important for wildlife migration.
21. Conserving the land for wildlife, watershed and environmental reasons are the primary priorities and, to the extent that recreational and other activities further those primary priorities, they are important.
22. Corridor 22 should remain a winter trail and hiking.
23. Corridor 22 trail not listed on map. Need info on this.
Have seen horse trailers(2) parked in lot @ BRCF.
24. A variety of trails for hiking should be created, giving different experiences. Forests should be maintained with good lookouts where possible. Motorized vehicles should be discouraged. Snowmobiling ok. Nature education programs should be held.
25. Probably the single most important message is to make every resident living or recreating within 250 feet of the lakeshore understand how fragile freshwater bodies are to human presence and how they can enjoy the lake and still have minimal adverse impact. Many people around the lake are not MMLA members, do not attend MMLA meetings and seem clueless about their responsibilities. We need to bring these people into the education program and perhaps SELT can do this so we can all enjoy a little piece of paradise.

26. Maybe there could be an ATV trail that connects all properties?
27. It would be nice to see certain trails open to ATV/dual sport bikes.
28. I have a concern about off highway recreational vehicles OHRV's. They rip up trails, and should be limited. Although they can have a purpose, there is substantial misuse and abuse by those on these vehicles. How will they be policed?
29. Personally, I think conservation of wildlife & lasting preservation habitats comes first, with access for hikers (only) second. Snow Mobile trails / advocacy for motor vehicle should be a last priority IMO.
30. Again, I see snowmobile, horseback riding trails for walking and hiking, 4 x 4 side-by-side type activities, which are growing population in the state and bringing good revenue should be looked into as well
31. Please keep trails open to the horseback riding. Just as people love to hike so don't we enjoy the woods on our horses.
32. Please protect the hunting access.
My daughters use this land and have great family memories and experiences.
33. Keep snowmobiling and hunting a reasonable distance from non residential areas.
34. Keeping public land open to hunting is crucial for maintaining ecological balance, supporting conservation efforts, and fostering outdoor traditions. Hunting on public lands helps manage wildlife populations, preventing overpopulation that can lead to habitat destruction and increased human-wildlife conflicts. Additionally, hunting licenses and fees contribute significantly to conservation funding, ensuring the preservation of natural habitats and biodiversity. Public access to hunting also promotes a deep connection with nature, encouraging responsible stewardship of the environment and sustaining cultural practices that have been passed down through generations. Ensuring public lands remain open to hunters is not just about preserving a sport, but about maintaining a vital part of our ecological and cultural heritage
35. Eventually, incorporate Lion's Pride facilities as overnight stop for through hiking, and, Cross country skiers.
Once proposed by Lion's Pride admin.
36. I am concerned about shoreline erosion caused by the constant use of ski boats loaded with water to increase wave action.
37. Ban fertilizer use.
38. As mentioned previously, it is very important to protect the quality of the water, because without it there would be absolutely no value in this area. It is unfortunate that there is a very high level of development going on currently and it does not appear that there is a high level of mindful stewardship, but rather it seems to be haphazard and will be detrimental to the quality of the Watershed if there is not more of a cohesive plan established.
Conservation is one step, but limiting development in non-conservation areas is just as important.
39. Storm water management begins here. Maintenance of town roads and drainage systems is equally important or the efforts will be wasted.

40. Nothin needs to be fixed or created. The more you fix, the more you create, the more damage you cause.
41. Animals need a place where they're not disturbed.
42. Protect it and keep it primitive as possible.
43. Leave the land the way it is.
44. Set it aside for nature to exist without human interference. The less we do with the land the better.
45. Don't allow wake boarding on the lake because it churns up muck and the disrupts water plant and wildlife.
46. none
47. Get rid of the trout hatchery!!
48. N/a
49. n/a
50. Is there a need to include not only New Durham residents but also the surrounding towns? Farmington, Wolfeboro, Alton?
51. Why is any forestry/tree cutting desirable for conservation and stewardship?
52. There is a lot on the plate here, and I think some things need to be lower priority. For example, protecting endangered species should be relegated to org. that specialize and work with them but keep focus on trails etc while maintaining watershed etc.
53. I'm good
54. The house on top of Mt. Jesse is not needed. It should be dismantled and removed.
55. None
56. Allow and encourage disc golf on SELT land
57. Nothing other than what I have already said.