

# Merrymeeting Lake Watershed

## Conservation, Recreation, and Stewardship Survey Summary

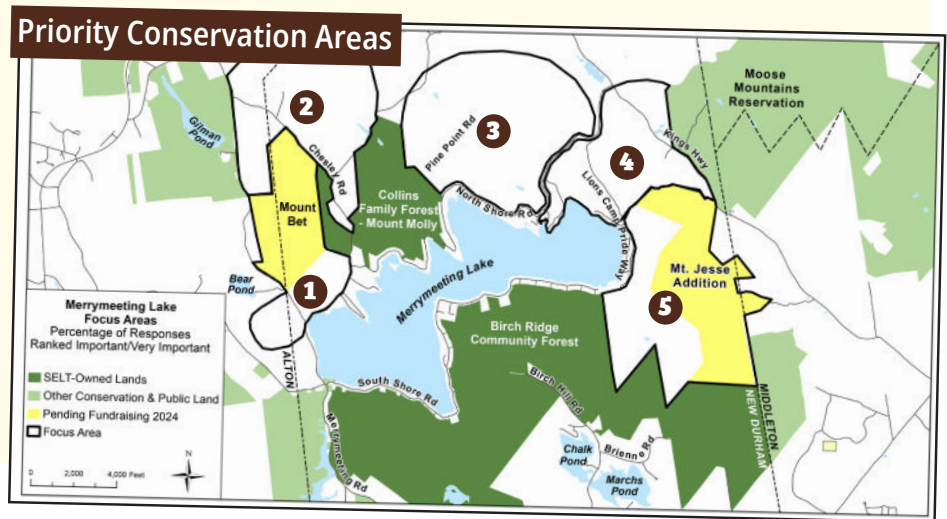
SELT and the Merrymeeting Lake Association completed a public opinion survey between April 23 and May 29, 2024 to capture the priorities of community members with regards to ongoing conservation and stewardship of the Merrymeeting Lake watershed. Below is a summary of what we heard from our friends and neighbors for conservation, recreation, and stewardship goals in the Merrymeeting region. (The upshot: it was all about the two W's - **Water quality and Wildlife.**)

### Conservation *When asked about the importance of various conservation priorities, survey says...*



Geographically, **at least 80% of respondents** identified the remaining unconserved areas – including Mt. Jesse and Mt. Bet - as **Important or Very Important for future conservation.**

- 1** Mt. Bet - 86%
- 2** Devil's Den / Chesley Road - 76%
- 3** Mt. Cavetry - 86%
- 4** Pine Point / Lion's Camp Pride - 86%
- 5** Mt. Jesse - 89%



### Concerns for the Future of the Merrymeeting Lake Watershed

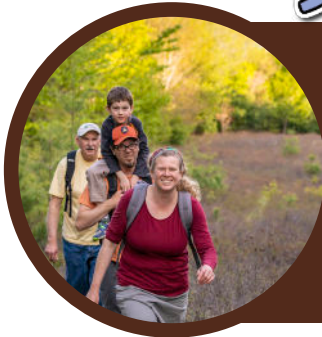
*Percentage of responses indicating Concerned or Very Concerned*



- 93%** - Degradation of water quality, invasive species, or cyanobacteria (blue-green algae)
- 89.16%** - Development / loss of forestland
- 83.87%** - Shoreline erosion
- 82.4%** - Over building of the shoreline

## Recreation *When asked to rank the importance of recreation goals, survey says...*

91%



of respondents identified **water quality, limited impact on wildlife habitat, and reduced soil erosion** as Very Important or Important priorities for trail design and maintenance.

74.5%



of respondents Strongly Agree or Agree SELT should **focus on finishing and maintaining its current trail system** on Birch Ridge, Mount Molly, and Mount Bet before creating new trails.

**Of-street parking was identified as Very Important or Important by nearly 60% and 53% feel it is Very Important or Important to improve experience with signs / maps / kiosks.** 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.

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

## Stewardship *When asked to prioritize land management goals, survey says...*

90.69%



of respondents identified **water quality** as Very Important or Important for land management goals for conserved lands.

77.73%



of respondents identified **wildlife habitat improvement and diversification** 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.**

Submitted comments offered appreciation while highlighting conflicting opinions on recreational uses currently allowed, such as horses and snowmobiling, and those prohibited entirely, such four wheelers (ATVs).

For the complete survey results and all comments, visit [seltnh.org/mmlsurvey](http://seltnh.org/mmlsurvey).