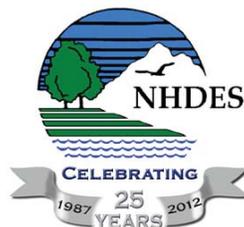


# New Hampshire Volunteer Lake Assessment Program

## 2011 Great North Woods Regional Report



Little Diamond Pond, Stewartstown





**New Hampshire  
Volunteer Lake Assessment Program  
2011 Great North Woods Regional Report**

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May 2012



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## **INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY**

New Hampshire is home to approximately 900 lakes and ponds, and thousands of river miles. Protecting our lakes and rivers is critical to sustaining New Hampshire's drinking water resources, aquatic and natural environments, recreational and tourism industries.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) recognizes the importance of these waterbodies in maintaining a healthy ecosystem for our current and future generations. Protecting high quality waters and restoring those that are impaired requires coordination and partnership between federal, state and local governments, non-profits, regional commissions, lake associations, and watershed residents.

To help citizens assess the health of New Hampshire's lakes and ponds, DES established the Volunteer Lake Assessment Program (VLAP) in 1985. The program is a volunteer-driven cooperative effort between the State and local governments, lake associations and lake residents. VLAP trains citizen volunteer monitors to collect water quality data at lakes and their associated tributaries on a monthly basis during the summer. VLAP compiles, interprets and reports the data back to state, federal and local governments, lake associations, and lake residents.

VLAP volunteer monitors are invaluable stewards for New Hampshire's lakes. Volunteer monitoring allows DES to establish a strong set of baseline chemical and biological data, determine long-term water quality trends and identify emerging water quality issues. DES acts on these findings through its funding and regulatory programs. Volunteers use this information to educate lake and watershed residents, businesses and local governments on best management practices to keep New Hampshire's lakes and ponds clean. They have been, and will continue to be, a key element in protecting the integrity of New Hampshire's lakes.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

VLAP is a cooperative program between DES and lake residents and associations. Currently, approximately 500 volunteers monitor water quality at 180 lakes throughout New Hampshire. Interest in the program has grown drastically in the past ten years as citizens have become more aware of the connections between land use activities and water quality. Volunteer monitors continually collect high quality data on their local waterbodies and educate watershed residents.

Volunteer monitors are trained by DES to use monitoring equipment to collect lake water quality data, survey the surrounding watershed, and sample the streams and rivers that are tributaries to the lake. Each of the participating lakes must be visited by a DES biologist on a bi-annual basis. This visit is a valuable event in which the volunteer monitors have an opportunity to discuss water quality and watershed concerns and receive recommendations on potential remediation activities. Also, the event allows DES biologists to perform a field sampling techniques audit to evaluate

volunteer monitor's ability to collect quality data, and to collect information on additional water quality parameters as necessary. Volunteers then sample on their own for the remaining summer months.

To further encourage volunteer monitoring, DES, established partnerships with the Lake Sunapee Protective Association (LSPA), Colby Sawyer College (CSC) in New London, NH, and Plymouth State University (PSU) in Plymouth, NH to operate VLAP satellite laboratories. These satellite laboratories serve as a convenient location for volunteers to borrow sampling equipment and deliver water samples for analysis. These strategic locations serve the Dartmouth Lake Sunapee, North Country and White Mountain regions.

The data gathered by the volunteers are reviewed by DES Quality Assurance Officers and Satellite Laboratory Managers and imported into DES' Environmental Monitoring Database (EMD). During the winter, DES biologists review and interpret the water quality data, perform trend analyses, and compile the results into annual reports. The high quality data gathered through VLAP also helps DES to conduct statewide surface water quality assessments. Assessment results and methodology are published and submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by DES every two years as a requirement of the Clean Water Act.

Once the volunteer monitors receive the data and the annual report for their lake, DES encourages the volunteers to relay that information to their respective associations, organizations, businesses, and local governments. Volunteers are also kept informed of the latest in lake management and water quality issues through an annual newsletter, technical and educational materials, regional workshops, and information on important legislation. In addition, DES biologists give presentations at lake association meetings and participate in youth education events. Educational initiatives, such as those mentioned above, allow volunteers to recognize potential water quality or shoreland violations around the lake and report their findings to DES. Volunteer monitors are dedicated, proactive lake stewards who are concerned for the well-being of their lakes.

## **MONITORING AND PARAMETER SUMMARY**

VLAP encourages the collection of comprehensive data sets on key water quality parameters from participating lakes to determine overall health of the system. The lake and tributaries are sampled several times each year over a period of years. This establishes baseline water quality data and allows for the discernment of long-term water quality trends. These trends depict lake health and provide invaluable information to DES' mission to protect New Hampshire's lakes. The sampling efforts of the volunteer monitors supplement the environmental monitoring efforts of DES. Only through the assistance of volunteer monitors can such a high volume of sampling be accomplished throughout the state.

DES recognizes the importance of collecting data sets that are representative of varying conditions. VLAP has an EPA approved Quality Assurance Project Plan

(QAPP). The QAPP identifies specific responsibilities of DES and volunteers, sampling rationale, training procedures, and data management and quality control. DES and volunteers adhere to the QAPP regime to ensure high quality and representative data sets are collected.

Volunteers collect samples once per month in June, July and August, with some lakes monitored more or less frequently. Samples are collected at approximately the same location each month at each deep spot thermal layer, major tributaries (those flowing year round) and seasonal tributaries during spring run-off. The samples are analyzed for a variety of chemical and biological parameters including: pH, alkalinity, conductivity, chloride, turbidity, total phosphorus, and *E. coli* (optional). Additional in-lake data are also collected at the deep spot including lake transparency (with and without a viewscope), chlorophyll-a, phytoplankton, and dissolved oxygen and temperature profiles. Volunteer monitors are also trained to identify and collect samples of suspicious aquatic plants and cyanobacteria.

Environmental outcomes are measured by making comparisons to established New Hampshire averages and ranges of lake water quality, and state water quality standards. If analytical results for a particular sampling station frequently exceed state water quality averages or standards, then additional sampling to identify potential pollution sources is necessary. Volunteers often conduct storm event sampling, tributary bracket sampling, and spring run-off sampling to better assess watershed health and provide additional data to guide lake management decisions.

*Appendix A includes a summary of each monitoring parameter and Appendix B includes recommended best management practices to remediate pollution sources.*

## GREAT NORTH WOODS REGIONAL SUMMARY

The Great North Woods Region (GNW) consists of those towns in New Hampshire's Coos County. Bordering portions of the Connecticut River, Vermont, Maine, and Canada, the area is home to the pristine Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge, portions of the White Mountain National Forest, and the Connecticut Lake System.

Freshwater resources in the GNW region provide valuable drinking water and recreational opportunities and play an important role in the regional economy. Freshwater recreation, including boating, fishing and swimming, in the GNW Region generate approximately \$26 million dollars in sales, \$9 million in household income, and 419 jobs annually (Nordstrom, 2007). A perceived decline in water quality as measured by water clarity, levels, flows, aesthetic beauty, or overuse could result in approximately \$2 million dollars in lost revenue, \$650,000 in lost household income and 30 lost jobs (Nordstrom, 2007).

Similarly, a decline in water clarity alone can result in a decrease in New Hampshire lakefront property values. A one meter decrease in water clarity can lead to an average decrease in property values of between 0.9 and 6.0 percent in New Hampshire (Gibbs, Halstead, Boyle & Huang, 2002). This may negatively impact property tax revenues, especially in a state where there are approximately 64,000 vacation homes concentrated around the Lakes Region (lakes), Seacoast (ocean) and North Country (skiing) (Loder, 2011). According to a 1999 publication of the Society for the Protection of New

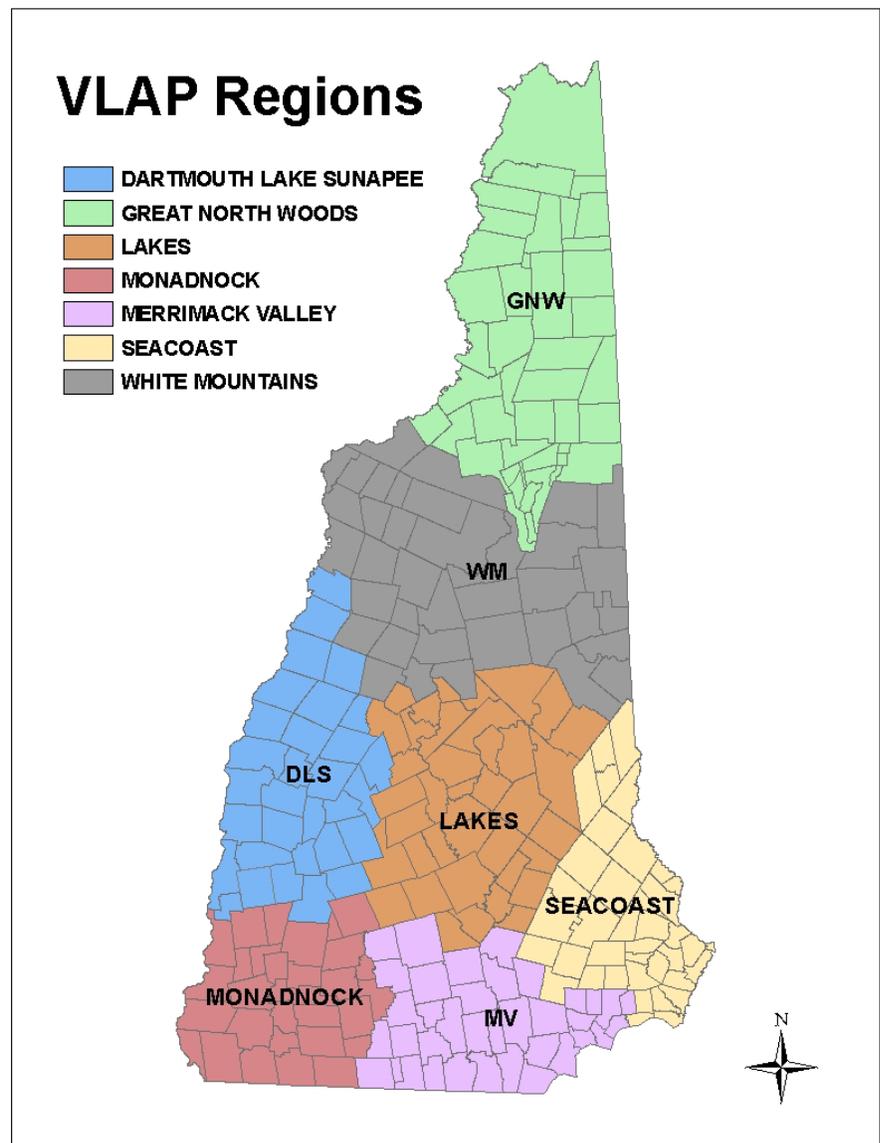


Figure 1. VLAP Regions

Hampshire Forests, “The Economic Impact of Open Space in New Hampshire”, vacation homes contribute approximately \$286 million to state and local tax revenues (note: open space includes lakes). For a town with a large number of lakefront homes (vacation or residential), a decline in water clarity can cause decreased property values and local tax revenue.

The GNW region encompasses the Level 8 Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) Watersheds of the Upper Connecticut River, Upper Androscoggin River and Lower Androscoggin River. The HUC boundary defines a specific drainage basin of a major river or series of smaller rivers. There are 18 HUC 8 watersheds in New Hampshire. There are seven VLAP regions (Figure 1). VLAP lakes in the GNW region include:

<b>Lake Name</b>	<b>Town</b>
Clarksville Pond	Clarksville
Martin Meadow Pond	Lancaster
Little Diamond Pond	Stewartstown
Success Pond	Success
Burns Pond	Whitefield
Forest Lake	Whitefield/Dalton

## **LAND USE AND POPULATION GROWTH**

According to the 2010 update of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests' publication "New Hampshire's Changing Landscape 2010", New Hampshire's population is expected to increase by 180,000 through 2030 (Figure 2). Almost 70 percent of that growth will occur in the Southeastern part of the state, particularly in Merrimack, Hillsborough and Rockingham counties.

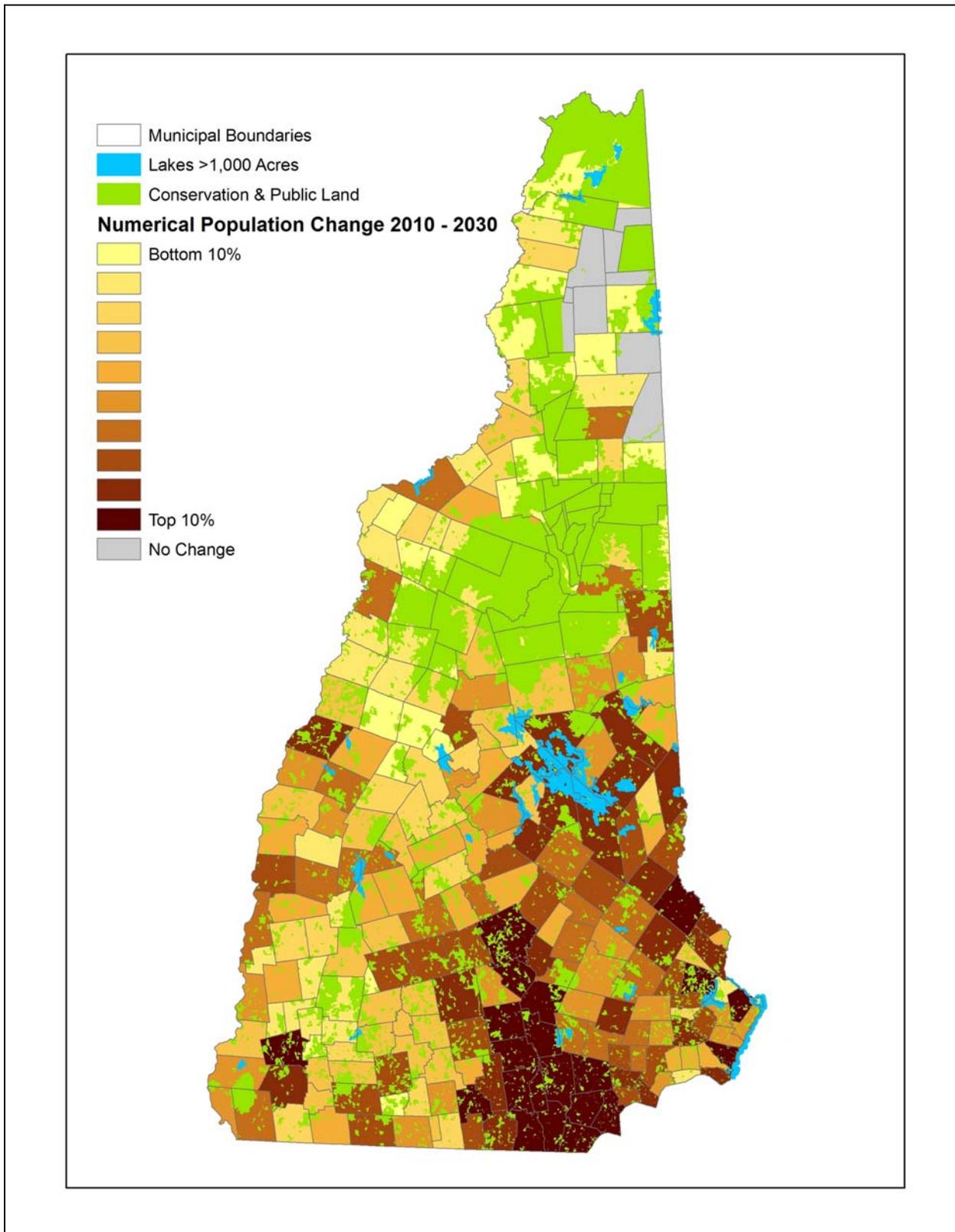
The population is anticipated to grow by approximately 3,000 people in Coos County by 2030. The majority of growth is estimated to follow main road corridors and urbanizing areas and is anticipated to be greatest in the towns of Berlin, Lancaster and Colebrook.

The GNW Region consists of over one million acres of land and surface water. Approximately 20,000 acres are surface waters (lakes, river, and wetlands) representing 2 percent of the total acreage of the GNW Region. Approximately 1,500 acres of surface water occurs in the towns predicted to experience the heaviest population growth, which represents approximately 6.5 percent of the total waterbody acreage in the GNW region. Approximately 60 percent of surface waters in the GNW Region lie solely in the towns of Pittsburg and Errol.

Major land use categories in the GNW Region are forest, developed and agriculture. Population growth and land use change go hand in hand. Growing populations necessitate land clearing to accommodate new homes, housing complexes, roadways, and commercial businesses. Developed land corresponds to more impervious surfaces such as roadways, driveways, and rooftops. It also corresponds to the loss of tree canopy coverage, unstable sediments, wildlife habitat loss, and vegetative buffer loss. Consequences of development can negatively affect our waterbodies through increases in stormwater runoff, water temperatures, erosion, turbidity and nutrients, as well as shifts in aquatic life, aquatic plant, algae and cyanobacteria growth.

Overall, population growth in GNW region is a small percentage of the projected statewide growth. However, the GNW region contains a large percentage of total surface water area in New Hampshire. Efforts should be made to evaluate current land use activities, infrastructure, and regional water quality. This information should facilitate a plan to accommodate projected population growth while conserving and protecting valuable land and water resources.

Figure 2. New Hampshire Population Growth per Town 2010-2030



## **EXOTIC SPECIES**

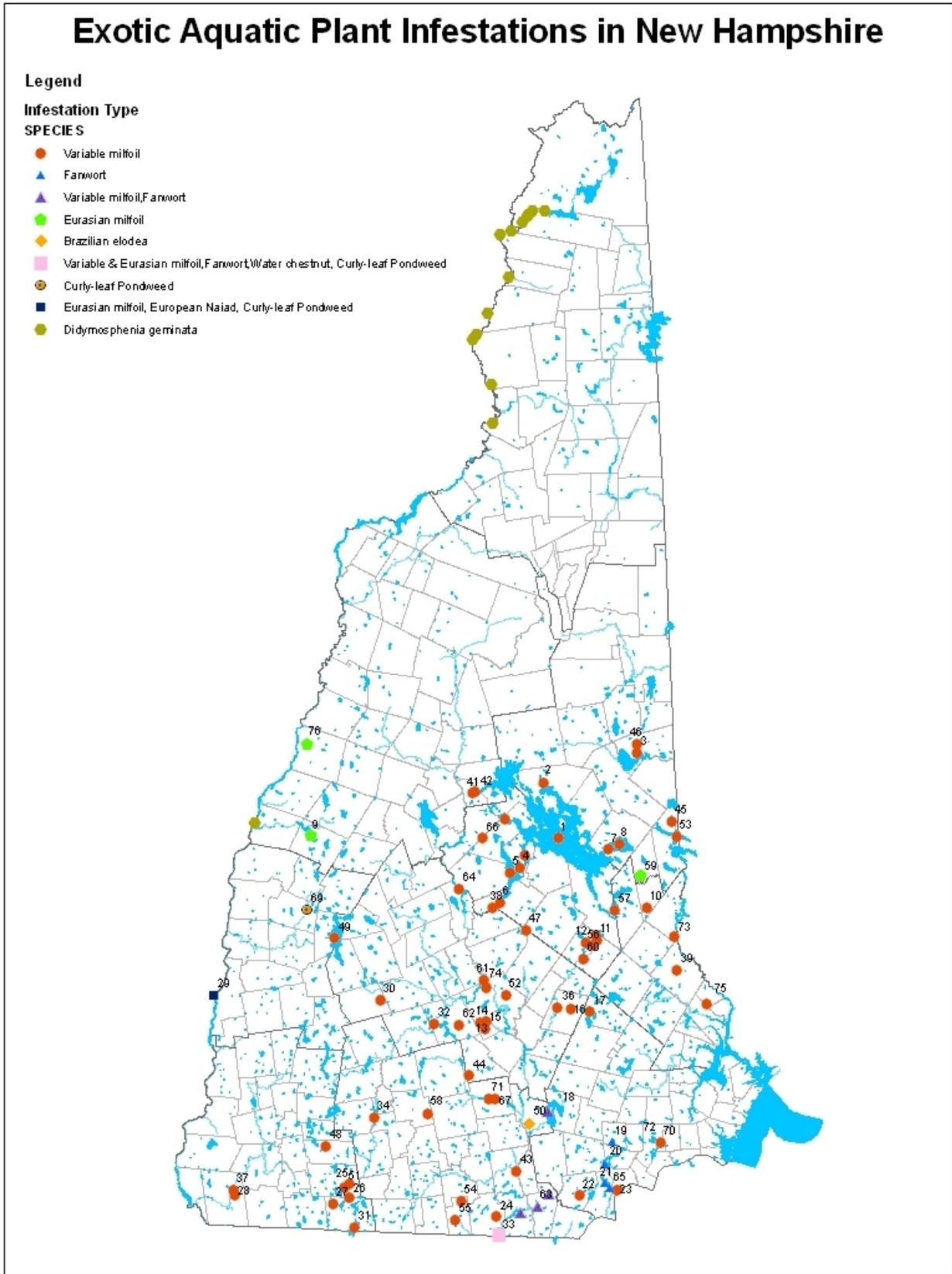
Exotic aquatic species are those plants and animals not native to New Hampshire's waterbodies, such as Variable milfoil and Zebra mussels. Many of these species are invasive and quickly spread throughout the aquatic system, altering habitat and the ecology of the system, often to the detriment of native species. They are a serious threat to the health of New Hampshire's aquatic ecosystem, recreation and tourism industries.

New Hampshire has 85 exotic plant infestations in 76 waterbodies. Those include Variable milfoil, Eurasian milfoil, Brazilian Elodea, Water chestnut, Curly-leaf Pondweed, Fanwort, European Naiad, and Didymo ("Rock Snot"). Variable milfoil inhabits the majority of infested waterbodies, and Didymo, an invasive alga, has now infested 54 river miles in the North Country. Currently, the GNW Region has remained exotic species free, that DES is aware of, except for the Didymo infestations in portions of the Connecticut River and smaller rivers/streams. Managing and monitoring the spread of Didymo is important to the recreational fishing industry. As Didymo grows, it chokes out habitat for macroinvertebrates (aquatic insects) and small fish and causes oxygen depletion as it decomposes. It is also aesthetically unpleasing, drastically changing the stream or river's appearance.

The unique nature and invasive tendencies of these exotic species heighten the need to prevent new infestations, manage current infestations and engage watershed residents. One program that educates the public and engages watershed residents is the DES Weed Watchers Program. The Weed Watchers program has approximately 750 volunteers dedicated to monitoring lakes and ponds for the presence of exotic aquatic plants. Volunteers are trained to survey their lake or pond once a month from May through September. To survey, volunteers slowly boat, or sometimes snorkel, around the perimeter of the waterbody and its islands. Using the materials provided in the Weed Watcher kit, volunteers look for suspicious aquatic plant species. After a trip or two around the waterbody, volunteers have a good knowledge of its plant community and immediately notice even the most subtle change. If a suspicious plant is found, volunteers send a specimen to DES for identification. Upon positive identification, a biologist visits the site to determine the extent of infestation, initiates a rapid response management technique where possible, and formulates a long-term management plan to control the nuisance infestation.

Another program dedicated to public education and engaging watershed residents is the Lake Host™ program. The Lake Host™ Program is funded through DES and Federal grants. The program was developed in 2002 by NH LAKES and DES to educate and prevent boaters from spreading exotic aquatic plants to waterbodies in New Hampshire. Since then, the number of participating waterbodies has doubled, the number of volunteers involved and boats inspected has quadrupled, and the number of "saves" (exotic plants discovered) has consistently increased. The program is invaluable in educating boaters, preventing recreational hazards, avoiding property value and aquatic ecosystem decline, addressing aesthetic issues, and saving costly remediation efforts.

Figure 3. NH Exotic Aquatic Plant Infestations



## GEOMORPHOLOGY AND CLIMATE

Chemical, physical and biological properties of lakes often reflect how they were formed. Lake formation can occur in a variety of ways. In New Hampshire, most lakes were formed during the last ice age as glaciers retreated. Lakes were also formed from rivers (oxbow), and were man and animal made (impoundments, dams and beavers). These formations create distinct lake morphology, such as length, width, area and volume that affect the lake's ability to adapt to shifts in climate and land use.

Along with morphological characteristics of lakes, the bedrock and sediment geology is also important in understanding lake properties. Underlying geological properties can affect the pH and acid neutralizing capacity (ANC) of our surface and groundwater. New Hampshire is typically referred to as the "Granite State" because the bedrock geology consists of variations of Igneous Rock high in granite content and typically contributes to a lower pH and less capacity to buffer acidic inputs such as acid rain. Metamorphic rocks make up the remainder of bedrock geology and consist of slate, schist, quartzite and carbonate rocks which tend to contribute to a more neutral pH and better buffering capacity.

Along with bedrock geology, climate also drives multiple processes in lake systems. Lakes respond to shifting weather conditions such as sunlight, rainfall, air temperature, and wind and wave action in various ways. This variability is reflected in the types and number of biological communities present, and chemical and physical properties of the lake system. It is essential that we understand how these factors influence water quality data collected at individual lake systems. Therefore, volunteers record pertinent weather data, rain and storm event totals on field data sheets while sampling.

The GNW Regional climate conditions in 2011 were average for temperature but extremely wet based on data recorded in Berlin, NH and surface water temperatures recorded by VLAP (Table 1). Air temperatures in May and August were average compared with historical temperatures, while June was slightly cooler, and July and September was slightly warmer. Overall, the 2011 average regional summer air temperature was 0.1° cooler than the historical regional average. Regional surface water temperatures were average in June, cooler in July, and warmer in August. Overall, the 2011 average regional surface water temperatures were 0.2° cooler than the historical regional average.

**Table 1. Current Year and Historical Average Temperature and Precipitation Data for GNW Region**

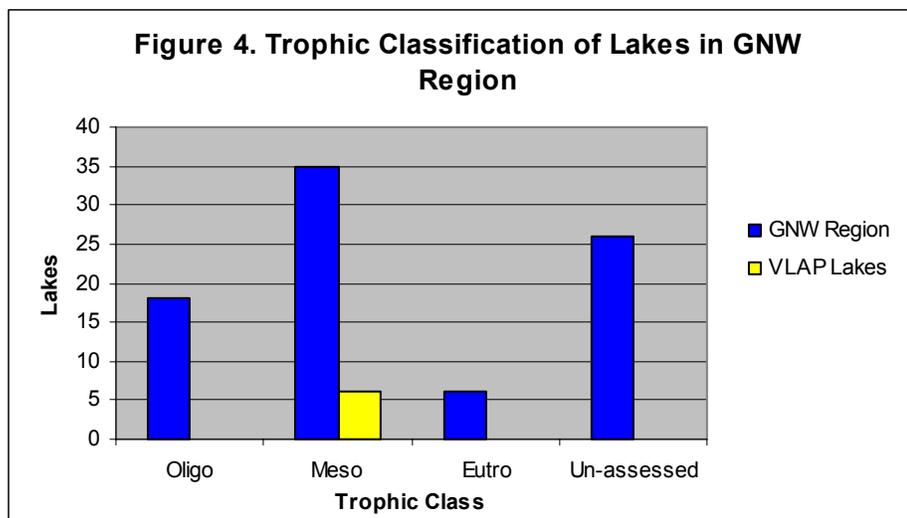
	May	June	July	August	September	Summer
<b>2011 Average Air Temperature (°F)</b>	65.4	72.4	79.6	77.0	69.7	72.8
<b>Annual Average Air Temperature (°F)</b>	65.5	74.1	78.3	77.0	69.0	72.9
<b>2011 Average Surface Water Temperature (°F)</b>	-----	68.5	70.8	74.8	-----	71.4
<b>Annual Average Surface Water Temperature (°F)</b>	-----	68.3	73.2	73.3	-----	71.6
<b>2011 Precipitation (in.)</b>	5.97"	3.08"	3.14"	8.65"	2.83"	4.73
<b>Annual Average (in.)</b>	3.49"	4.12"	3.81"	4.10"	3.51"	3.81

The 2011 monthly summer rainfall amounts were well above average in May and August. Overall, precipitation was above average marked by heavy rains in May that carried into a drier than normal June and July; however the end of the summer season was marked by Tropical Storm Irene, which dumped over 3.5 inches of rain in 24 hours. Tropical Storm Irene also caused severe flooding and damage in the northern and western portions of New Hampshire. The above average rainfall likely led to an increase in lake turbidity, decrease in water clarity, and an increase in phosphorus and algal growth.

## MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

New Hampshire considers a public water to be great ponds or artificial impoundments greater than 10 acres in size, public rivers, streams and tidal waters. The GNW region consists of 85 lakes, or great ponds, six of which participate in VLAP. Data on the remaining 95 percent of lakes are sparse, being only occasionally sampled through the DES Lake Survey Program, or not sampled at all.

The DES Lake Survey Program monitors NH's lakes on a rotating basis, with the goal of conducting a comprehensive lake survey every 10 to 15 years. The surveys compile chemical, biological and morphological data. The data are used to assign a lake trophic



class to each waterbody. The trophic class provides an assessment on how “aged” a lake is and can provide information on how population growth and human activities may be accelerating the aging process, also known as lake eutrophication.

Three trophic classes are used to assess a lake's overall health, Oligotrophic, Mesotrophic and Eutrophic. Oligotrophic lakes have high dissolved oxygen levels (> 5 mg/L), high transparency (> 12 ft.), low chlorophyll-a concentrations (< 4 mg/L), low phosphorus concentrations (< 10 ug/L), and sparse aquatic plant growth. Eutrophic lakes have low levels of dissolved oxygen (< 2 mg/L), low transparency (< 6 ft.), high chlorophyll-a concentrations (> 15 mg/L), high phosphorus concentrations (> 20 ug/L), and abundant aquatic plant growth. Mesotrophic lakes have characteristics that fall in between those of Oligotrophic and Eutrophic lakes for the parameters listed.

The trophic class breakdown of GNW region lakes is shown in Figure 4. Eighteen lakes are Oligotrophic, 35 Mesotrophic, 6 Eutrophic, and 26 un-assessed for trophic classification due to lack of data. Six Mesotrophic lakes participate in VLAP. Approximately 60 percent of the GNW lakes are classified as Oligotrophic and Mesotrophic, however, approximately 90 percent of those lakes do not participate in VLAP or a similar monitoring program. As human activities in watersheds accelerate lake aging, it is imperative to keep a close eye on the health of those lakes in the Oligotrophic and Mesotrophic classes. Efforts should also be made to gather data on the un-assessed waterbodies. Protecting a lake and preventing lake aging is much more cost-effective than restoring a damaged lake.

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## **VLAP WATER QUALITY DATA INTERPRETATION**

The GNW Region is home to six lakes and ponds that participate in VLAP. Volunteer monitors at each lake collect comprehensive data sets at the deepest spot of the lake and from streams entering or exiting the lake. Deep spot sample collection is representative of overall lake quality conditions and provides insight into how the lake responds to localized events such as stormwater and drought. Deep spot data are used to establish long term water quality trends and to provide information into the overall health of the waterbody. Stream sample collection is representative of what flows into the lake from the surrounding watershed. Stream data are used to identify potential watershed pollution problems so that remediation actions occur before they negatively impact the overall health of the waterbody.

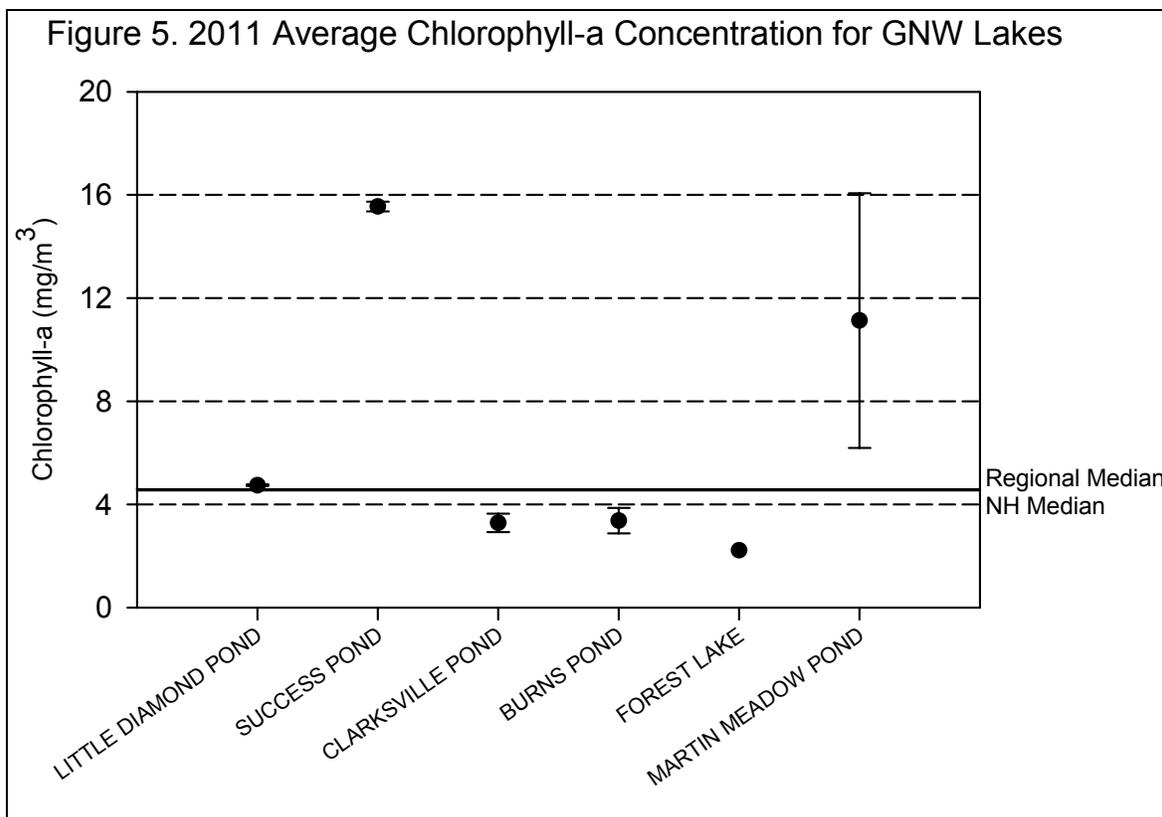
The following section provides a summary of the VLAP monitoring parameters, long-term water quality trends, and an analysis of the current year and historical data for the VLAP lakes and ponds in the GNW region compared with regional and state medians. The deep spot data for the epilimnion, or surface water layer, is compared to the New Hampshire median to provide an understanding of how the quality of your lake deep spot compares to other New Hampshire lake deep spots. Similarly, the epilimnion data are compared to the regional median to provide an understanding of how the quality of your lake deep spot compares with other local lakes. Median values were utilized to represent historical state and regional conditions as the value tends to better represent the actual middle number while minimizing the effects of outlier values. Average annual lake and regional values are then compared to the historical medians.

*A complete list of monitoring parameters and how to interpret data are included in Appendix A.*

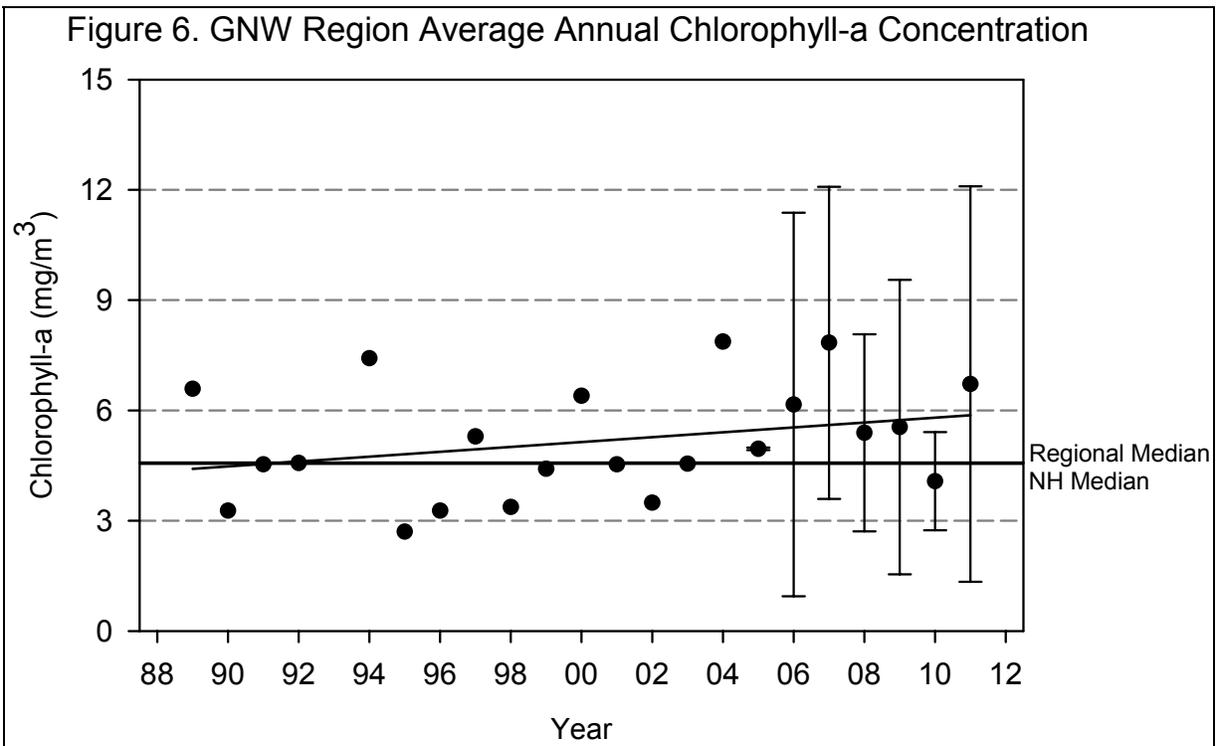
## Annual and Historical Chlorophyll-a Results

Algae are microscopic plants that are naturally found in the lake ecosystem. Algae and cyanobacteria contain chlorophyll-a, a pigment used for photosynthesis. The measurement of chlorophyll-a in the water gives biologists an estimation of the algal abundance or lake productivity. **The median summer chlorophyll-a concentration for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 4.58 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. The median chlorophyll-a concentration for the GNW region is 4.54 mg/m<sup>3</sup>.**

The 2011 average chlorophyll-a concentration for each lake in the GNW Region are represented in Figure 5. The regional and state medians are provided for reference. The average chlorophyll-a concentration at four GNW lake deep spot stations are equal to or below the state and regional medians and are typically representative of good water quality. Only two lakes experienced average chlorophyll-a concentrations above the state and regional medians. Typically, chlorophyll-a concentrations that exceed 5.0 mg/m<sup>3</sup> are considered higher than desirable. Therefore, approximately 67 percent of the sampled deep spots have chlorophyll-a concentrations representative of Oligotrophic and Mesotrophic classifications.



The average annual chlorophyll-a concentrations for the GNW region are represented in Figure 6. Prior to 2005, chlorophyll-a concentrations represent one lake, Forest Lake in Whitefield whose average chlorophyll-a concentrations remained between 3.0 and 6.0 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. Additional GNW lakes began sampling in 2005 and since then, average chlorophyll-a concentrations have increased to between 5.0 and 7.0 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. Chlorophyll-a concentrations generally remained below the state and regional medians prior to 2005, but have been elevated above the medians since. Additional data sets are needed to establish representative chlorophyll-a trends for GNW region lakes.



### Chlorophyll-a Trend Analysis

Those lakes in GNW region with 10 or more consecutive years of data were subject to statistical analyses to determine whether water quality trends were significantly improving, degrading, stable, or variable, meaning values fluctuate between years and there is no clear trend. Chlorophyll-a trends were assessed for approximately one deep spot at Forest Lake in Whitefield. The remaining five lakes did not have 10 or more consecutive years of data, therefore, trend analyses were not conducted.

Table 2 represents the GNW lake chlorophyll-a trends with the direction of the arrow indicating whether chlorophyll increased, decreased, or remained stable. Note that improving trends reflect a decrease in chlorophyll levels, and vice-versa. Chlorophyll-a concentrations at Forest Lake are not significantly increasing or decreasing and are more variable in nature. Chlorophyll-a concentrations are typically related to phosphorus concentrations because as phosphorus increases, more algal growth occurs. The stable chlorophyll-a trends are a positive sign for the region.

Table 2. Chlorophyll-a Trends in GNW Lakes

Lake Name	Improve	Degrade	Stable	Variable
Forest Lake, Whitefield				★

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## Annual and Historical Transparency Results

Volunteer monitors use the Secchi disk, a 20 cm disk with alternating black and white quadrants, to measure how far a person can see into the water. Transparency, a measure of water clarity, can be affected by algae and sediment in the water, as well as the natural color of the water. Transparency may also be measured using a viewscope, a cylindrical tube, designed to decrease surface water properties that may cause difficulty in viewing the Secchi disk. A comparison of transparency readings collected with and without the use of a viewscope shows that the viewscope typically increases the depth to which the Secchi disk can be seen into the lake, particularly on sunny and windy days. **The median summer transparency for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 3.20 meters. The median transparency for the GNW region is 3.25 meters.**

The GNW Region experienced above average rainfall during the 2011 sampling season, and was marked by Tropical Storm Irene at the end of August. This likely resulted in a lower overall transparency for many of the region's waterbodies as stormwater runoff transports exposed and unstable sediments and debris.

Figure 7 represents the 2011 average transparency for each lake in the GNW Region compared with state and regional medians. The average transparencies at four GNW lake deep spots are below both the state and regional medians and are typically representative of poor water quality conditions. Two average lake transparencies are above the state median and are typically representative of good water quality. Overall lake depth plays an important role when interpreting transparency data. Shallow lakes will typically report lower transparencies than deeper lakes, yet these waterbodies may be quite clear and have good water quality. A better representation would be to look at how transparency changes over time.

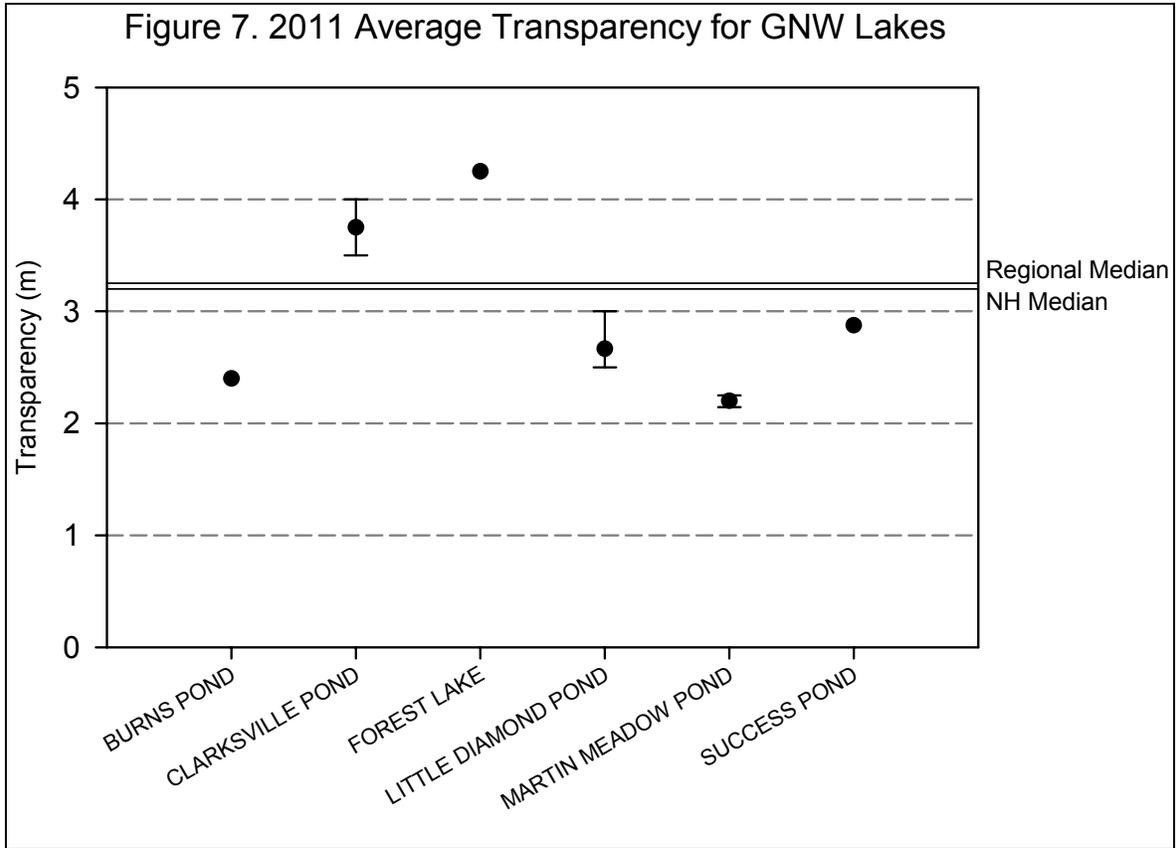
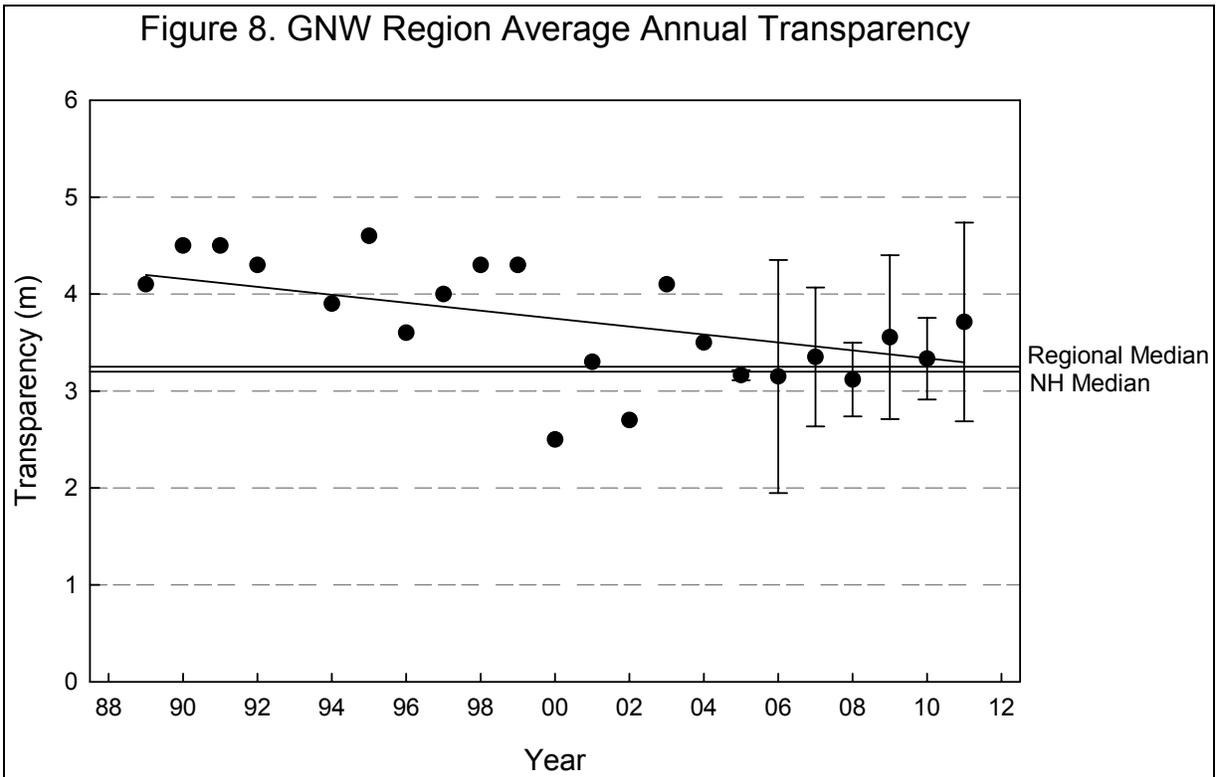


Figure 8 represents the average annual transparency for the GNW region. Average transparencies for the period 1989 to 2004 represents one lake, Forest Lake in Whitefield where transparency has remained relatively stable. Additional GNW lakes began sampling in 2005, and since then average transparency has increased slightly and has generally remained above the state and regional medians. Overall, additional lake data are needed to accurately assess transparency trends in the GNW region.



### Transparency Trend Analyses

GNW Region lakes with 10 or more consecutive years of data were subject to statistical analyses to determine whether water quality trends were significantly improving, degrading, stable, or variable, meaning values fluctuate between years and there is no clear trend. Transparency trends were assessed for one deep spot at Forest Lake in Whitefield. The remaining five lakes do not have 10 or more consecutive years of data.

Table 3 represents the GNW lake transparency trends with the direction of the arrow indicating whether the transparency increased, decreased, or remained stable. Note that improving trends reflect an increase in transparency, and vice-versa.

Transparency at Forest Lake in Whitefield has not significantly improved or degraded since monitoring began. Transparency has fluctuated between 2.5 and 4.6 meters.

Transparency, or water clarity, is typically affected by the amount of algae, color, and particulate matter within the water column. Additional data sets are needed to more accurately assess transparency trends for GNW Lakes. Typically, stormwater runoff transports exposed and unstable sediments and other debris to lake systems. It is

imperative to identify potential areas of concern in the watershed and utilize best management practices to control stormwater and erosion. Please refer to Appendix B for reference material on do-it-yourself stormwater best management practices.

**Table 3. Transparency Trends in GNW Lakes**

<b>Lake Name</b>	<b>Improve</b>	<b>Degrade</b>	<b>Stable</b>	<b>Variable</b>
Forest Lake				*

## Annual and Historical Total Phosphorus Results

Phosphorus is typically the limiting nutrient for vascular plant and algal growth in New Hampshire's lakes and ponds. Excessive phosphorus in a pond can lead to increased plant and algal growth over time. **The median summer epilimnetic (upper layer) total phosphorus concentration of New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 12 ug/L. The median epilimnetic total phosphorus concentration of the GNW region is 9 ug/L.**

Figure 9 represents the 2011 average epilimnetic total phosphorus concentration for GNW region lakes. The regional and state medians are provided as reference. The regional median is lower than the state median, and is considered to be representative of Oligotrophic conditions. Three GNW lakes experienced average phosphorus concentrations equal to or below the regional and state medians. One GNW lake experienced average phosphorus concentrations between the regional and state medians. Two lakes experienced phosphorus concentrations greater than the regional and state medians. The majority of GNW lakes experience phosphorus concentrations representative of Oligotrophic and Mesotrophic conditions.

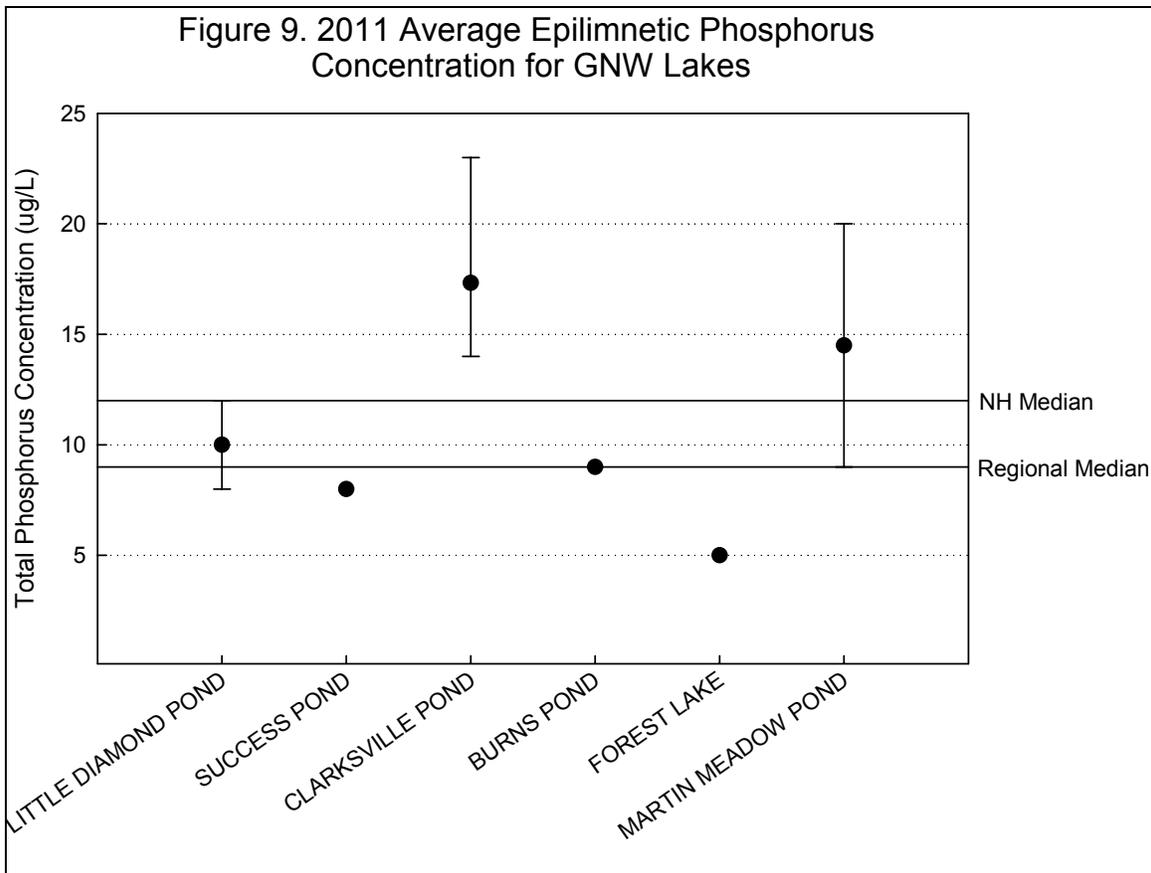
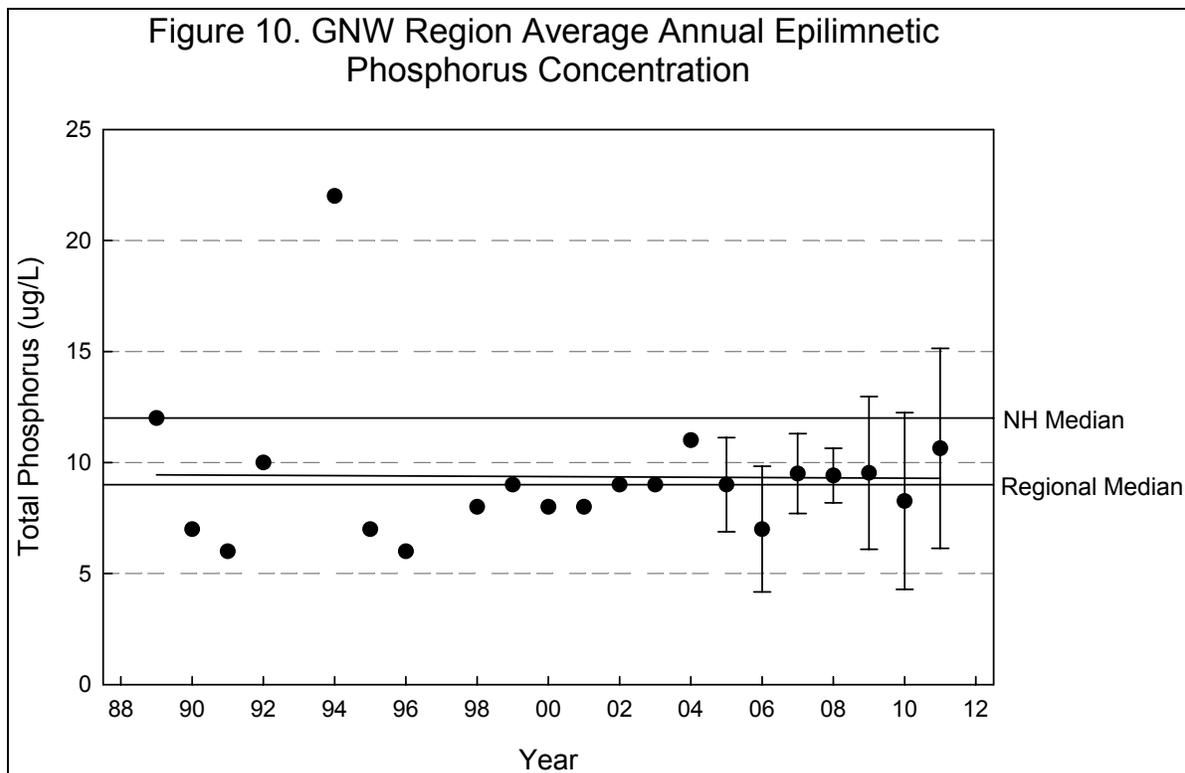


Figure 10 represents the average annual epilimnetic phosphorus concentration for the GNW region. The average regional epilimnetic phosphorus concentrations have typically remained below or slightly above the regional median of 9 ug/L since 1989. Data from 1989 through 2004 represent one lake, Forest Lake in Whitefield. Additional GNW lakes began sampling in 2005, and since then, average epilimnetic phosphorus concentrations increased slightly, but have remained relatively stable. Overall, additional lake data are needed to accurately assess epilimnetic phosphorus trends in the GNW region.



### Epilimnetic Phosphorus Trend Analyses

GNW region lakes with 10 or more consecutive years of data were subject to statistical analyses to determine whether water quality trends were significantly improving, degrading, stable, or variable, meaning values fluctuate between years and there is no clear trend. Epilimnetic total phosphorus trends were assessed for one deep spots at Forest Lake in Whitefield. The remaining five lakes do not have 10 or more consecutive years of data.

Table 4 represents the GNW lake epilimnetic total phosphorus trends with the direction of the arrow indicating whether the phosphorus has increased, decreased, or remained stable. Note that improving trends reflect a decrease in phosphorus levels, and vice-versa. Epilimnetic phosphorus has significantly improved, meaning phosphorus concentrations have decreased over time, at Forest Lake in Whitefield.

This is a positive trend for Forest Lake as increasing epilimnetic phosphorus is often a result of phosphorus-enriched stormwater runoff related to increased watershed development. An increase in watershed development often results in an increase in impervious surfaces and unstable sediments. This contributes to an increase in stormwater runoff and sedimentation to rivers and lakes. Efforts should be made to adopt watershed ordinances to limit stormwater runoff and other phosphorus contributions. Watershed residents should be educated on utilizing and installing best management practices to control stormwater runoff from their own properties. For more information and resources to control phosphorus loading refer to Appendix B.

**Table 4. Epilimnetic Total Phosphorus Trends in GNW Lakes**

<b>Lake Name</b>	<b>Improve</b>	<b>Degrade</b>	<b>Stable</b>	<b>Variable</b>
Forest Lake	▼			

## **Dissolved Oxygen Data Analysis**

The presence of dissolved oxygen is vital to bottom-dwelling organisms as well as fish and amphibians. If the concentration of dissolved oxygen is low, typically less than 5 mg/L, species intolerant, meaning sensitive, to this situation, such as trout, will be forced to migrate closer to the surface where there is more dissolved oxygen but the water is generally warmer, and the species may not survive. Temperature and time of day also play a role in the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water column. Water can hold more oxygen at colder temperatures than at warmer temperatures. Therefore, a lake will typically have a higher concentration of dissolved oxygen during the winter, spring, and fall than during the summer. Oxygen concentrations are typically lower overnight than during the day. Plants and algae respire (use oxygen) at night and photosynthesize (produce oxygen) during the day. Dissolved oxygen levels may shift depending on the abundance of aquatic plants and algae in the littoral (near shore) and pelagic (deep water) zones.

Dissolved oxygen and temperature profiles are collected at VLAP lakes on an annual or bi-annual basis. The average dissolved oxygen levels for the GNW region is 6.09 mg/L, which is in a critical range to support a wide range of aquatic life. For additional information regarding dissolved oxygen please refer to Appendix A.

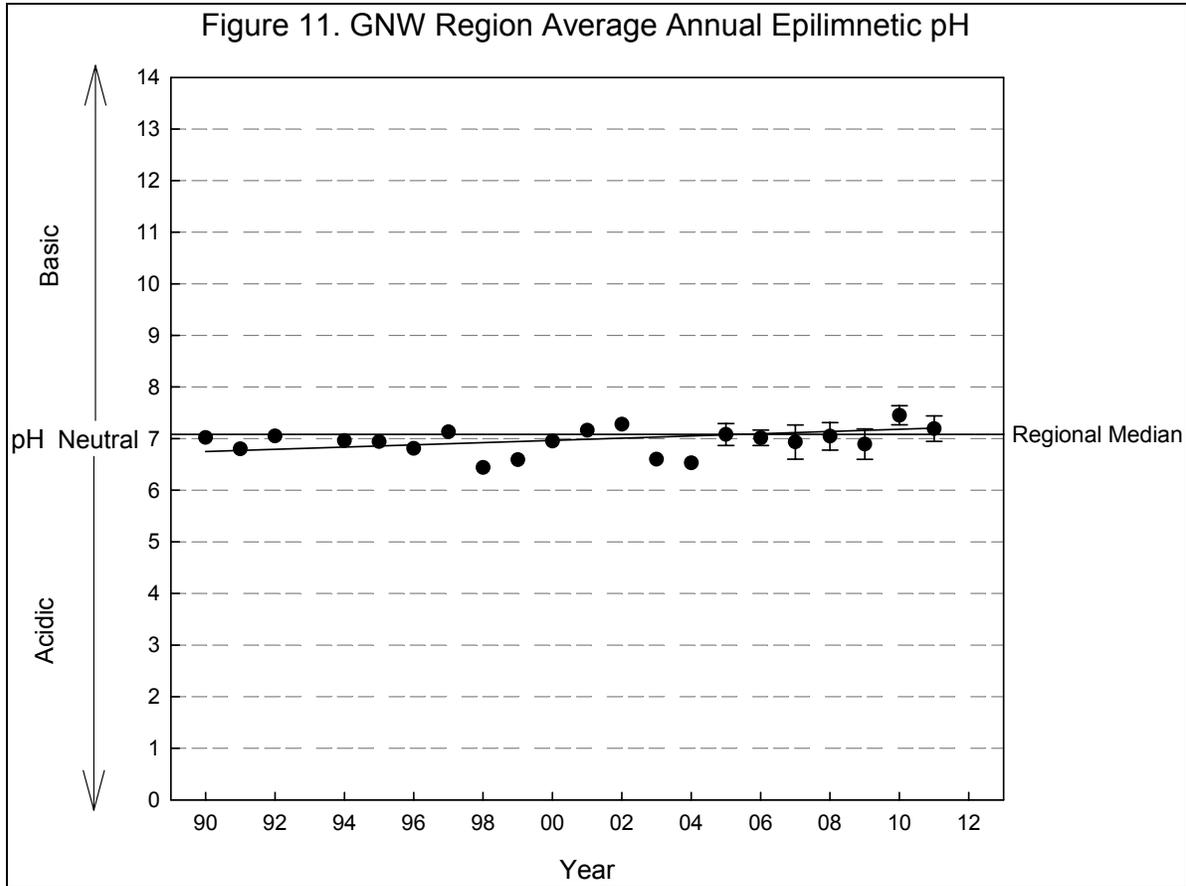
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## Annual and Historical Deep Spot pH Data Analysis

pH is measured on a logarithmic scale of 0 (acidic) to 14 (basic). pH is important to the survival and reproduction of fish and other aquatic life. A pH below 6.0 typically limits the growth and reproduction of fish. A waterbody is considered impaired for aquatic life when the pH falls below 6.5 or above 8.0. **The median epilimnetic pH value for New Hampshire's lakes is 6.6, which indicates that the state surface waters are slightly acidic. The median epilimnetic pH for the GNW region is 7.08.**

Figure 11 represents the average annual pH value for GNW lakes. The 2011 average epilimnetic pH value at GNW lakes was 7.19, which means that the water is approximately neutral. The lowest, most acidic, average pH value was 7.08 measured at Success Pond in Success whereas; the highest, most basic, pH value was 7.38 measured at Little Diamond Pond in Stewartstown. The regional pH is fairly stable and generally above the NH Median.

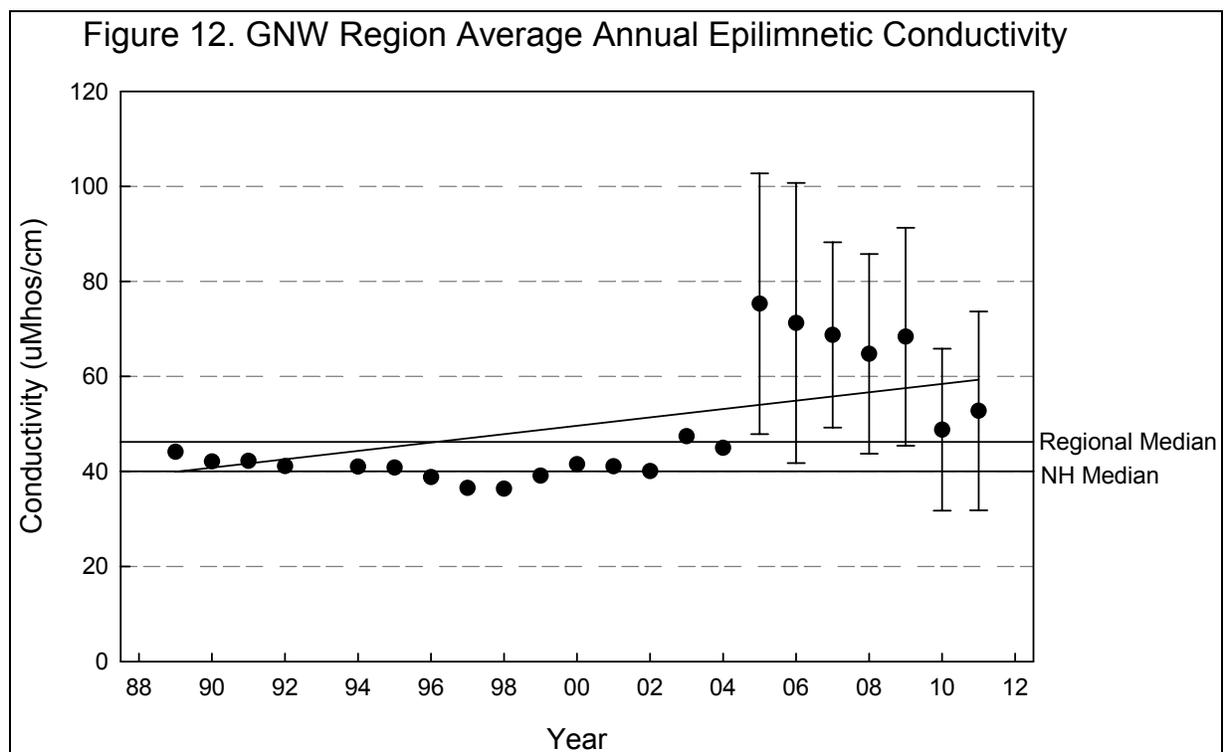
Variations in pH values between lakes and between different geographical regions may depend on the composition and weathering of underlying bedrock and the lake water chemistry. Another contributing factor to pH is acid deposition received as a result of emissions from power plants and vehicles. This increases levels of atmospheric carbon, nitrogen and sulfur which fall back to the earth in the form of acidic precipitation.



## Annual and Historical Deep Spot Conductivity and Chloride Data Analysis

Conductivity is the numerical expression of the ability of water to carry an electric current, which is determined by the number of negatively charged ions from metals, salts, and minerals in the water column. The soft waters of New Hampshire have traditionally low conductivity values, generally less than 50 uMhos/cm. However, specific categories of good and bad levels cannot be constructed for conductivity because variations in watershed geology can result in natural fluctuations. **The median conductivity value for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 40.0 uMhos/cm. The median epilimnetic conductivity for the GNW region is 46.2 uMhos/cm.**

Figure 12 represents the average annual epilimnetic conductivity for the GNW region compared with the regional and state medians. The 2011 average epilimnetic conductivity value at GNW Lakes was 52.8 uMhos/cm, which is slightly greater than the state and regional medians. Conductivity values fluctuate widely among the region's lakes. The lowest value of 19.6 uMhos/cm was measured at Success Pond in Success, whereas the highest value of 83.4 uMhos/cm was measured at Martin Meadow Pond in Lancaster. Data from 1989 through 2004 represent Forest Lake in Whitefield and are stable and low. Additional lakes began sampling in 2005, and average conductivity jumped to greater than 60 uMhos/cm, but decreased back to average levels in 2010 and 2011. Overall, additional lake data are needed to accurately assess epilimnetic conductivity trends in the GNW region.



Generally, conductivity values in New Hampshire lakes exceeding **100 uMhos/cm** indicate cultural, meaning human, disturbances. An elevated conductivity trend typically indicates point source and/or non-point sources of pollution are occurring within the watershed. These sources include failed or marginally functioning septic systems, agricultural runoff, road runoff, and groundwater inputs. New development in the watershed can alter runoff patterns and expose new soil and bedrock areas, which could also contribute to increasing conductivity. In addition, natural sources, such as mineral deposits in bedrock, can influence conductivity.

The chloride ion (Cl-) is found naturally in some surface and ground waters and in high concentrations in seawater. Research has shown that elevated chloride levels can be toxic to freshwater aquatic life. In order to protect freshwater aquatic life in New Hampshire, the state has adopted **acute and chronic** chloride criteria of **860 and 230 mg/L** respectively. The chloride content in New Hampshire lakes is naturally low in surface waters located in remote areas away from habitation. Higher values are generally associated with salted highways and, to a lesser extent, with septic inputs. **The median chloride value for New Hampshire's lakes is 4 mg/L. The median epilimnetic chloride value for the GNW region is 6 mg/L.**

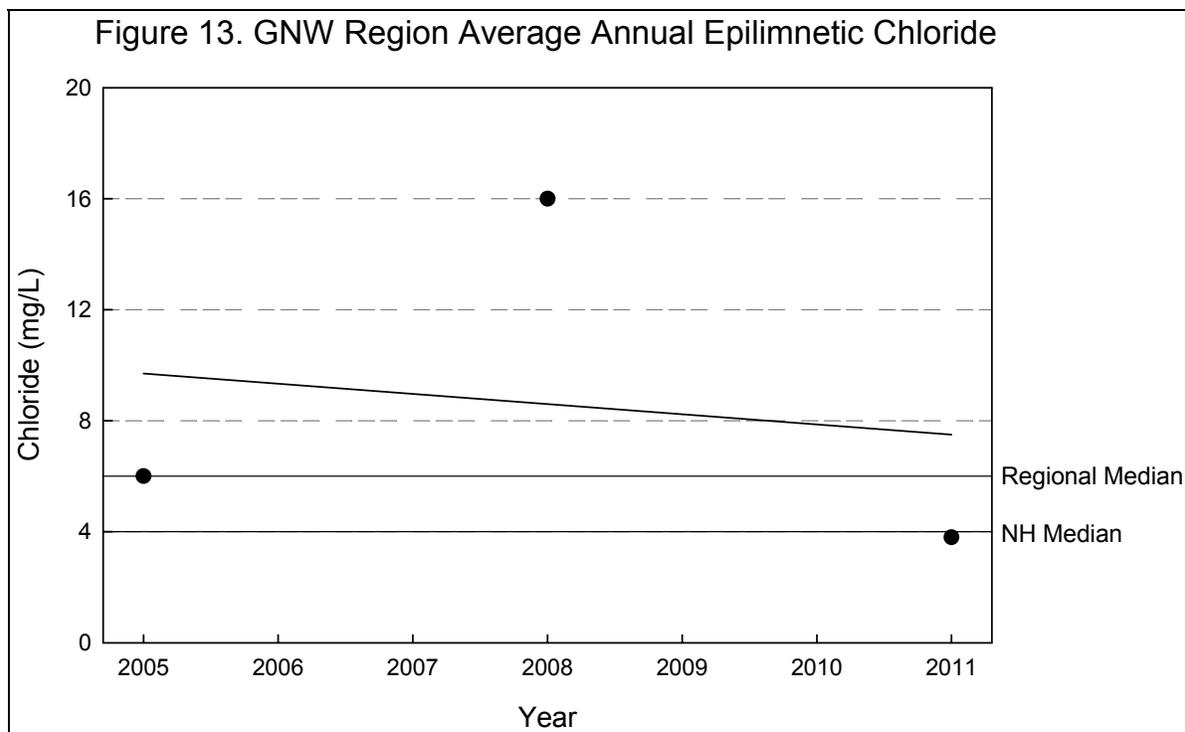


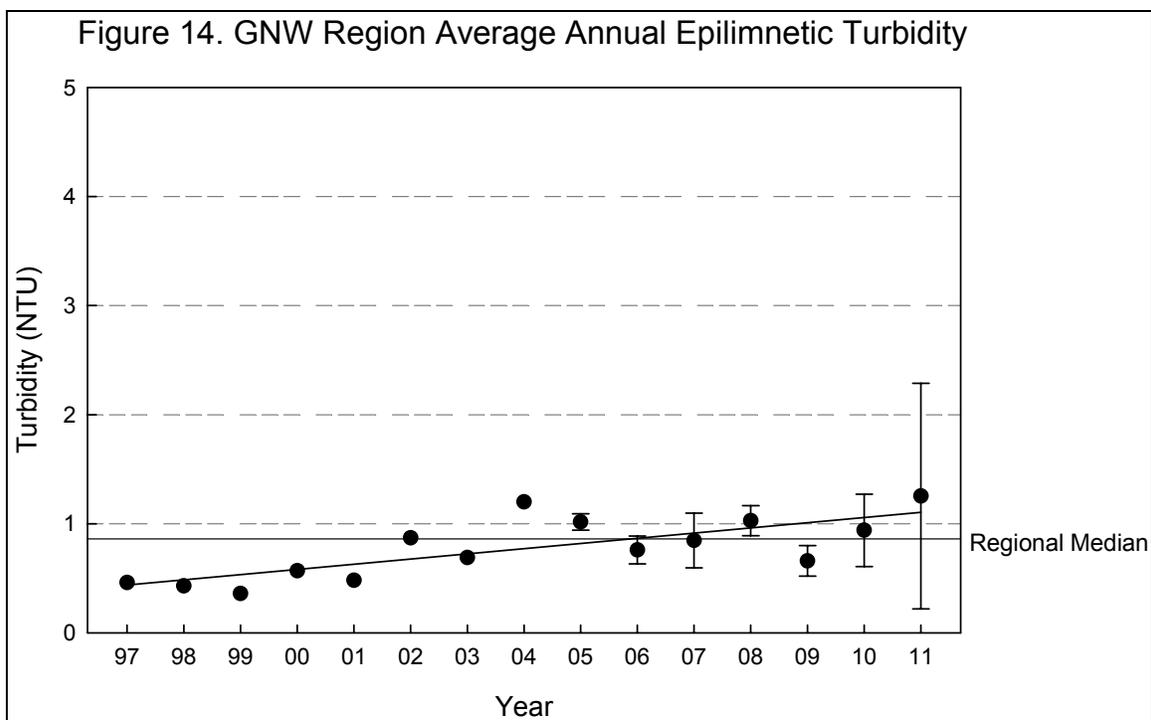
Figure 13 depicts average annual epilimnetic chloride levels for select regional lakes. The chloride measurement is relatively new for VLAP and is an optional analyte for participating lakes. Lakes that serve as water supplies or where conductivity levels may be influenced by chloride are analyzed annually. Average regional epilimnetic chloride levels generally range between 4 and 20 mg/L, however this is based on very limited data. Additional lake data are needed to accurately assess chloride trends in the GNW region.

Watershed management efforts to control un-natural sources of conductivity and chloride in waterbodies should employ a combination of best management practices in regards to winter salting practices. State and local governments and private homeowners should evaluate the use of road salt and alternatives to reduce the amount of material applied while maintaining public safety. *For additional information on the relationship between conductivity and chloride, please refer to Appendix A. For additional information on best management practices please refer to Appendix B.*

## Annual and Historical Deep Spot Turbidity Data Analysis

Turbidity in the water is caused by suspended matter (such as clay, silt, and algae) that cause light to be scattered and absorbed, not transmitted in straight lines through water. Water clarity is strongly influenced by turbidity. **The Class B surface water quality standard for turbidity is no greater than 10 NTUs over the lake background level. The median epilimnetic turbidity for the GNW region is 0.86 NTU.**

Figure 14 represents the average annual epilimnetic turbidity for the GNW region. The 2011 average epilimnetic turbidity at GNW lakes was 1.25 NTU, which is slightly greater than the regional median. Regional epilimnetic turbidity is typically below 1.0 NTU and is average for most NH lakes. Data from 1997 through 2004 represent Forest Lake in Whitefield. Additional lakes joined the program in 2005, and since then average annual epilimnetic turbidity has been slightly higher. The trend line indicates average annual turbidity levels are slightly increasing, particularly since 2001, however additional lake data are needed to accurately assess epilimnetic turbidity trends in the GNW region.



New Hampshire has experienced more significant rainfall events in recent years which may be contributing to an increase in stormwater runoff and turbidity in the region's lakes. Elevated deep spot turbidity levels are typically the result of stormwater runoff, algal or cyanobacteria blooms, and/or disturbance of lake bottom sediments. Stormwater BMPs should be implemented when possible to reduce the amount of suspended sediments and debris transported to surface water. Boating activity in shallow areas should adhere to rules specified by the NH Marine Patrol in regards to speed and no wake zones. If an algal or cyanobacteria bloom is observed, please

contact DES immediately. *For additional information on turbidity, stormwater BMPs, algae, and cyanobacteria please refer to Appendices A and B.*

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