

# Linking Students, Landowners and Lake-Friendly Landscaping through LEAP (the Northern New England Lake Education and Action Project)



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## Situation



Lake water quality in northern New England is threatened by increased development pressure. New homeowners are comfortable with suburban-style lawns and landscapes, and are easily convinced to apply nutrients and pesticides to their lawns.

## Desired Outcomes

Landowners will establish or enhance lakefront and watershed buffer areas  
 Students will learn aspects of sustainable landscape design and plant selection

## Perceived Barriers

Many lakefront landowners do not understand the benefits of a buffer, or do not have the physical ability or the time to install buffers  
 Landowners believe that a functional buffer would ruin their view of the lake  
 Landowners are comfortable with the suburban lawn and view buffers as wild and unmanaged

## Method

Provide student guidance and labor to establish or enhance lakefront buffers in Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire

**Youth Action Teams/Conservation Corps: A summer program for lake communities where high school and college age youth assist in the design and planting of lake friendly landscapes. Shoreland homeowners volunteer their properties and provide the cost of materials.**

## Vermont

- Focused on Lake St. Catherine
- Partnered with Poultney-Mettowee NRCS
- Hired local middle and high school students



- Eighteen students worked over the two summers
- Completed demonstration Welcome Garden, an idea conceived by the Lake St. Catherine Association. The garden showcases the types of native plants that work well in a buffer
- Eighteen landowners converted lawn to buffer, varying in size from 5 feet of frontage to 150
- Will expand the program to nearby Lake Bomoseen in 2006



## Maine

- AmeriCorps leader supervised three college/high school students
- Partnered with Hancock, Penobscot and Waldo County Conservation Districts
- Focused on eight Watershed Stewards Program lakes



- Six students worked over the two summers
- The students converted 5000 ft<sup>2</sup> of lawn to buffer in 2004, 5500 ft<sup>2</sup> in 2005
- Eleven properties on three lakes completed in 2004, 13 on eight lakes in 2005
- Landowner contributions - \$6000 in 2004, \$17404 in 2005 (includes NH demo)
- Average landowner service hours - 20 in 2004, 41 in 2005

## New Hampshire

- Pilot projects completed on Pine River Pond, NH and Great East Lake, ME, including buffer installation and lake access redesign (with runoff diversion)
- Partnered with Maine Youth Team, Acton/Wakefield Watershed Alliance, and local volunteers, and used demo as training opportunity for local Youth Team
- Landowners contributed \$3000 for a landscape designer and permits, and \$4000 on materials



- NH DES has awarded the Acton Wakefield group an NPS education grant to cover over half of the program cost in 2006!

## Results/Lessons Learned

- Partnerships with local groups and agencies are essential to success
- Local youth work best, led by local groups and agencies, with Extension assistance
- A barrier we did not originally identify is the lack of landowner knowledge about plants and landscapes
- A new target audience for our outreach - Master Gardeners

## Products

- Landscape designs and plant lists
- "Shoreline Stabilization Handbook" (VT)
- "Designing your Landscape for Maine", a new fact sheet detailing the design process
- NH reviewed a guide/technical assistance effort: "Integrated Landscape Practices: An Innovative Tool to Reduce the Spread of Invasive Species and Create Sustainable New Hampshire Landscapes."
- **Upcoming products (in 2006):**
- Rain Garden fact sheet
- Youth Conservation Team guidance

