

## A History of Raquette Lake Preservation Foundation (RLPF)

Genesis to 2020

By Kenneth B. Hawks, 2022

### The Genesis

In 1994, my sister Carolyn and her husband Joseph Gerdin started building an all-electric camp on a parcel of land as a part of Watch Point on the north shore of Raquette Lake. We paid Niagara-Mohawk \$33,000 in June of 1994 for the installation of electricity to both Carolyn's and my camps. We were assured that since we had complied with all the necessary permit processes all would be well. In 1995, correspondence with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) revealed that since there were property title issues associated with our property, the electricity might be denied. Since the title issue was raised, a large number of persons were interested and a public meeting was held. At that meeting an informal working group was formed to explore the issue and keep folks informed. For our property, the DEC backed off on title.

Without Raquette Lakers' knowledge, the State Attorney General was asked for a ruling on the legality of underwater cables on state land. His Formal Opinion (96-F2) was rendered on February 22, 1996, stating (in essence) that the laying of cables on state land was the same as leasing the land which is prohibited under Article 14 of the Constitution.

To keep folks informed, the Gerdins and Hawks held a public meeting to announce our intent to sue the state and void the AG's ruling on several grounds, one of which was that at the time the State didn't own the lake bottom. The consensus at the meeting was Raquette Lake needed an organization to represent Raquette Lake and keep people informed of the doings in Albany. A working group was formed.

In May of that year, 1996, Richard 'Dick' Bird and several camp owners on Woods Point incorporated an organization they titled the "Raquette Lake Property Owners Association, Inc." At the same time, during May and June of 1996, the working group held several meetings and formulated a community wide organization. One of the decisions of the working group was to reimburse Dick for the formation of their organization and adopt that name for our new organization. On July 6<sup>th</sup> 1996, at a meeting held in the Fire House, the Raquette Lake Property Owners Association Inc. (RLPOA) became an official organization supporting all of Raquette Lake and Township 40 with the adoption of the By-Laws, and the subsequent election of Officers. The officers were President - Ray Rissler, Vice President - Jim Blanchard, Secretary - Jill Gracey, Treasurer - Robert Rosborough, Board Members - Ken Hawks, Dick Bird, and 'Steamer' Walke.

On September 17, 1997, Judge Joseph C. Teresi, State Superior Court Justice, signed a "Stipulation of Settlement and Discontinuance of the Action", granting grandfathering of the right to have cables run from Green Point to Watch Point. The others on Woods Point and Pine Point that were affected were subsequently granted permits to obtain power as well.

### The Raquette Lake Property Owners Association, Inc. Era

On August 31, 1996 the first RLPOA meeting was held with Assemblyman Mark Butler as our first speaker.

The principal focus early in the course of RLPOA was to work with the state government, the environmental organizations and other interested parties, e.g., Niagara Mohawk (now National Grid), to convince folks that underground and under water cables posed no threat to the environment. The Association also spent time to get a bank account, establish dues and accept donations, form committees, start a membership list, and create a newsletter - "A View of the Lake" was the winning title. Much of the real work effort was aimed at obtaining the title records of the DEC, and corresponding with our elected representatives in Albany and Hamilton County. The position of the DEC was that they would ONLY discuss property title issues one case at a time.

Important conclusions at that first meeting were:

1. RLPOA would not seek to become an "Authority Organization" with 'police' powers, but would be an information provider, an advocate for Raquette Lake with government, and would support the entire Raquette Lake community.
2. We would join the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) for their actions to promote economic and tourism in The Park.
3. We needed to push the DEC toward getting proper buoys on Raquette Lake!
4. Pursue possible actions to clear up titles in Raquette Lake.

In 1998, RLPOA changed the number of Directors from 3 to 6; conducted a survey of our members and village residents on Raquette Lake issues; started a web page; started to investigate what it would take to do blackfly control as in Inlet and Old Forge (the answer was cost and labor prohibitive even for just the village). Also, the size and space limitations of the Town Dock were discussed and brought to the Town Supervisor; the discussion of newsletter distribution to everyone and/or put on the website was discussed and the Board was split.

In 1999, RLPOA invited the Town of Long Lake supervisor to our meeting and he agreed to expand the size of the town dock. The need for improvements to the municipal water supply was discussed at the annual meeting as was the quality of the lake water. The DEC Region 5 Director briefed us that the lake water quality of Raquette Lake was better than most lakes in Region 5. He was very supportive of lake water testing. The Director specifically said that 100' riparian rights were being recognized by the State so docks (and dock pipes, etc.) were OK to be on the lake bottom. The Village Historian, Jim Kammer, was made the Chairman of the Historical Committee. RLPOA committed to sponsoring several flower baskets on the light poles around the village.

In 2000, RLPOA partnered with the Fire Department to sell strobe lights for water access properties so the Fire and Emergency Medical Service responders could determine who needed EMS or fire support at night, while hiking, or any time help is needed at night. The local Sheriff's department was looking at implementing a dock numbering system for emergency response as well. Water level of the lake was discussed per the court ruling that the Raquette Lake Navigation Company (RLTC) had the legal right to maintain the lake level at 1762' ASL. The RLTC has delegated that right to the Raquette Lake Supply Company (RLSC). The approval of the dam design is still to this day (2022) mired in bureaucratic process. The Town Board was not interested in funding blackfly control. The issue of public bathrooms in the village was raised; the RLSC was willing to build the restrooms, if the Town of Long Lake would maintain them. The Town Board was not supportive of taking on that obligation. It was noted at the time of our September 2000 Annual Meeting that Raquette Lake contributed 39-40% of the Town income, but only 10% was returned in the form of services.

In 2000 RLPOA reached a watershed. Ray Rissler, as President, introduced the following concerns to the Board:

1. Declining membership.
2. Conflict in some of our goals:
  - a. Land title was a concern for summer residents but fulltime residents felt it was best left alone.
  - b. The project to detail map the lake for rocks, etc., was seen a helpful only to short term vacationers.
  - c. Regulation of water craft e.g., jet skis, was potentially an economic impact to the marinas.
3. The genesis of the organization was the issue of underwater cables. This became low level interest when the pending permits were all approved.
4. Do the vast majority of land owners want an association or would it be better if the various 'associations' around the lake e.g., Antlers, Sunset, North Point, pursued their own interest?
5. In 2000 the Long Lake Association (LLA) was formed with two goals: Water quality and the control of jet skis. Should RLPOA follow their guidelines?

In 2001, the DEC issued a number of Unit Management Plan (UMP) drafts affecting Raquette Lake. Two outlawed motorized craft on the Marion River and South Inlet and contained some other controversial provisions such as land title. A survey was conducted of the membership, and the vast majority wanted to continue motorized traffic on the river and inlet. A study by both Cortland and Cornell revealed that motorized traffic in both streams was very beneficial to their ecology. It was decided that the association determine a consensus position and communicate to the DEC on the various UMPs. The issue of noise from the RL Camps was brought up, the folks from Inman Island agreed to contact the Camps. Members were also concerned with the number of boats, especially canoes, navigating the lake at night without lights. Corky Risley (Hamilton County Deputy Sheriff) said to get the registration number and report it. The Town Board voiced their opposition to BTI blackfly control. Ray Rissler did not run for reelection and the steady hand that guided the formation of the association replaced by yours truly, Ken Hawks.

In 2002, there was a very poor turnout at the annual meeting which turned into a Board meeting with the Town of Long Lake Supervisor in attendance. A great deal of discussion ensued on BTI blackfly treatment; and a trial program for just the village and south shore was proposed. The bottom line is the Town Board was not in favor of spending money on black fly treatment but is studying the issue. A discussion of the Raquette Lake drinking water system problems revealed that the Adirondack Council (AC) is insisting on a Constitutional Amendment for permission to replace the current reservoir with drilled wells. The Personal Water Craft (PWC) (aka jet skis) discussion revealed that the vast majority of Raquette Lakers wanted them. Also, it was decided that we should recognize people in Raquette Lake who make significant contributions to the quality of life in the area. Thus the "Person of the Year" award was started.

In 2003, our efforts to expand the garbage Transfer Station resulted in extended hours. There was more discussion on the draft UMPs as they are evolving; there was much frustration with no action by the Town Board on BTI application; Burke's Marina expressed concerns about the 55 MPH speed limit

on RT28 and the association will obtain support for, and request the State Department of Transportation (DOT) survey the speed limit; [Note: DOT concurred that the speed limit should be lowered, but the State Police rejected the change]. The Sierra Club's proposal to the Governor to create The Oswegatchie Canoe Wilderness, a.k.a. "The Great OZ," was presented. This proposal includes among other things, making 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, Raquette and Blue Mountain Lakes motor free (as well as prohibiting all combustion engines). This drew a bit of emotional discussion and also some concrete suggestions. With respect to the village drinking water issues, the DEC and Department of Health (DOH) approved the drilling of test wells funded by a grant; the Adirondack Council (AC) announced plans to sue the State. If a Constitutional Amendment were passed, the AC would be happy. Public restrooms in the Village were again discussed but there is no commitment from the Town Board for upkeep; Aquatic Invasive Plants and Animals (AIS) were discussed but no one on the Board is up to speed on what threat or impact they might have to Raquette Lake.

In 2004, RLPOA hosted the Central Adirondack Search and Rescue Team for a presentation on their mission. The Constitutional Amendment on our drinking water issues has been introduced in the Legislature. The Town of Long Lake Supervisor has gone above and beyond to get our needs noticed and met. Next hurdle is the Adirondack Park Agency. There was much discussion on AIS, especially milfoil in the lake. Several approaches were looked at. An Invasives Committee was formed and Pat Deyle was appointed Chairman. The committee was tasked to set up an education program, lake shore survey system, and determine an approach to prevention of AIS in Raquette Lake. There still are some noise issues on the Lake. The Hamilton County noise ordinance was published on our web site.

In 2005, AIS was one of the top meeting issues. The Town Supervisor reported that the village drinking water system is now up and running despite the opposition. Loon surveys were commenced by some of our members. Some property title issues were raised but we were asked to keep a low profile while the water system occupied the focus of the Legislature and the administration in Albany.

In 2006, the Constitutional Amendment for our drinking water advanced by passing both the Assembly and the Senate; the E-911 system was brought on line; work continued to convince the Town Board for increased hours at the Transfer Station to include Sundays; the DEC is still in a quandary as to what to do with milfoil correction (versus prevention); we sent our first shoreline surveys to the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP). They were extremely well received! RLPOA sponsored Paul Smith's College to conduct a class in boat inspection for AIS; APIPP assisted RLPOA in conducting a significant survey of the Lake for AIS; at a Thursday Night program at St William's on Long Point the DEC Region 5 Biologist Richard Preall briefed that Raquette Lake need not fear VLM because it didn't grow in sand or among rocks, thus Raquette would never have a VLM problem. [In his defense the DEC regulations and the content of his briefing were based on extensive research of Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) not Variable Leaf Milfoil (VLM) and they are vastly different]. The Town provided \$3,000 and RLPOA raised the rest of the money to hire a Boat Launch Steward for the village launch ramp during the summer. The Association decided that prevention was critical but the key concern was 'what authority would an inspector have to reject a boat?' Discussions with RLSC determined that since they own the ramp, the steward had the authority to deny launches.

In 2007, the big news was that the Constitutional Amendment on the Raquette Lake community water supply will be on the November ballot, and the wells' pumping system was completed. The Town Supervisor was able to open the Transfer Station 7 days a week during the summer season. RLPOA

conducted another donation drive to fund a Boat Launch Steward in the village. The Town of Long Lake originated and hosted a large working forum that attracted representatives from 148 federal, state, and local governments; along with numerous special interest groups (including RLPOA) with the goal of seeking "A Common Ground". The "Common Ground Alliance Forum" (CGAF) is still an important influencing force in the Adirondacks. RLPOA got permission and published a handout on AIS. The APA visited Raquette and made some suggestions as to 'better' wording on our AIS control measures permit. We do have a DEC permit in place. Concern was voiced on who and how the DEC Lean-tos around the lake were being maintained. Current DEC policy was if the Lean-to needed much repair, burn it. Our membership discussed if we could step up and take care of them. On a more general level a comprehensive study of the concerns of our membership was distributed and a very good response was received.

In 2008, RLPOA hired a Paul Smith's College student as our Boat Launch Steward, and the Burke family became trained in boat inspections and covered their marina. The APA continued dragging their feet on our AIS control permit approval and we continued under the DEC permit. RLPOA wrote letters to the Legislature and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) asking that AIS brochures be included with boater registrations, but there was no interest in the DMV. The Town of Long Lake Board is spending \$35,000 a year for their community restroom and is not supportive of anything permanent in Raquette, so the decision was made to lease 'port-a-potties' for Raquette. At the July Annual Meeting RLPOA voted to support the Township 40 property title clearing working group effort!

In 2009, based on negotiations with the Town of Long Lake and the Long Lake Association, the Town would pay each association \$4,000 and the associations would raise money to pay the remainder of the Stewards' hours for a 40 hour week; and also provide volunteers for the additional 8 hours per week to have 7 days a week coverage. Our new Adopt A Natural Resource (AANR) permit with the DEC was been approved and matting of VLM commenced. RLPOA joined with LLA and Blue Mountain Water Watch (BMWW) to inspect the vessels doing the 90 Miler race. Boats stored at Burke's and Bird's were included in our inspection scope. At our Annual meeting the Department of Transportation (DOT) briefed us on their plans to resurface Route 28 from the village intersection to Otter Bay, widen and improve the road from Otter Bay to Golden Beach, and replace the South Inlet Bridge. The latter is a 5-7 year 'long term' project. The campaign to get the DEC to assume responsibility for VLM control in Raquette Lake continues. The VLM in the Marion River flowered and scientists from all over came to see it and take pictures and samples. The motion was passed that RLPOA become an IRS 501 (c) (3) Charity and NYS Not-For-Profit.

In 2010, we had actively working and fully trained, 15 Boat Launch Stewards and 20 shoreline surveyors. Benthic mats were purchased and installed. Paul Smith's College (PSC) was pursuing grants from the St. Lawrence watershed for Stewards, and we would be included. Numerous changes needed to our Corporate Charter and By-Laws to ensure our 501(c)(3) approval were revealed. Several of the required policy documents were passed by the Board. The idea of a special tax district for AIS prevention and remediation was advanced to the Town.

In 2011, the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP) asked if RLPOA would like to receive a grant for the installation of a system just coming into being that remotely monitored, via the internet, the village launch ramp. I-LIDS (Internet-Landing Installed Device Sensor) was described to the Board by the APIPP. The Board voted to proceed with the system, and it was installed with RLPOA

volunteer help in the village. PSC's grant covered two Boat Launch Stewards for Raquette. The special tax district has appeal to the Town Board and those who feel that everyone on Raquette should pay their fair share. An attorney familiar with the IRS and 501(c)(3) applications is being sought. To support I-LIDS and the Stewards, we established a Wi-Fi drop in the village.

In 2012, to further the acceptance by the IRS of our 501(c)(3) application RLPOA became the Raquette Lake Preservation Foundation (RLPF)! Several By-Laws changes were made to specifically include the Hamlet of Raquette Lake; allow businesses to become members; clarify the constraints of an "Associate Member"; allow any officer to receive and submit proxies; and change our Fiscal year to the calendar year. [The August 10, 2012 meeting minutes contain a complete discussion of the rationale for the changes.] The Township 40 working group has progressed with actual pending legislation and a settlement proposal coordinated in Albany. The special tax district became the Aquatic Plant Improvement District and would cost about \$13.90 / \$100,000 assessed evaluation. Long term parking at the village dock was discussed but the Sheriff's Department has received no complaints. Some of the residents have taken on the role of repairing a few of the Lean-tos around the Lake.

Officers for RLPOA:

Presidents:	Ray Rissler Kenneth Hawks	Directors:	Dick Bird Ken Hawks Stephen Walke
Vice Presidents:	Jim Blanchard Stephen Walke Pat Deyle		Pat Deyle Jeffery Sellon Steve Gauthier Tom Smedley
Secretaries:	Jill Gracey Carolyn Gerdin Mildred Gregory Lynne Ballou		John Pointer Jim Kammer Richard Wormack Tom Gregory John Merriman
Treasurers:	Bob Rosborough Stephen Walke Millie Gregory		Allen Bennett Bob LeFebvre Jim Colligan Karen Rogers

**Raquette Lake Preservation Foundation, Inc. Era**

In our first year as RLPF, 2012, we worked with Paul Smith's College (PSC) to obtain Boat Launch Stewards for the village and Burke's; continued our lake water sampling; attended the New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA) annual conference, briefed our lessons learned with I-LIDS, and coordinated with APIPP for AIS identification training and with PSC for Launch Steward Training for our members. In addition, our members built a shelter for our Stewards in the village next to the boat launch ramp. The Adirondack Park Launch Ramp Stewards coordinator declared it the best Stewards

facility in The Park. We formally submitted our IRS Form 1023 for official certification as a 501(c)(3) public charity. The 2013 Form states that average time to fill it out was 40 hours. Ours took a lot longer than that to fill in the multi-page form and gather and submit the supporting documentation. We also filed at a time when the IRS was under severe criticism for their handling of the Form 1023s. The big event for Raquette Lake was the appearance of "PROP 4" on the ballot in the November NYS election to resolve land title issues around Raquette Lake. The entire community came together to promote the passage of the Amendment! It passed with the second highest % rate of any Amendment to date!

In 2014, we presented a framed photograph of an aerial view of Raquette and a plaque to each of the five key members of the Township 40 Working Group for their successful work. We opened our Wi-Fi 'hot spot' in the village to everyone to use. Approval was finally received from the APA for AIS control in the Lake. We contributed to the Intra-Park transportation working group of the Common Ground Alliance Forum (CGAF). RLPF continued our VLM matting and hand harvesting efforts. RLPF, Inc. was slated to appear in the next release of IRS Publication 78 as we are officially a 501(c)(3)! The WeWork concerts started, and have definitely gotten folks' attention. The music volume, the obscene lyrics, etc., have most members very upset. The concept of a Constitutional Amendment on underwater utilities being exempt from Article 14 has been advanced with Raquette as the poster child. Since we have 250+ properties that are water *access* only, 4 businesses, a major NYS educational facility, and numerous climatic and environmental benefits that require or accrue from under water cables, our example is a unique and obvious one.

In 2015, we joined the newly formed Adirondack Lakes Association (ALA) and attended their annual conference and district conferences. RLPF participated in a meeting held on the Durant with the Executive Director of the Adirondack Council. The APA approved our General Permit for VLM remediation for the lake. SUNY Cortland's Biology Department started a multi-year effort restudying areas of the lake that had been inventoried by Dr. Titus of SUNY Binghamton. RLPF gave them a grant for \$1,000 for a graduate student to collect all the lake data Cortland had accumulated over the years and put it into a single database. A major effort was started to have WeWork act like a good neighbor. It was noted that the State Police ranking officers nearby were all 'out of town' that weekend. WeWork's website provided a great deal of examples of foul language not just by the entertainers all day long, but their seminar presenters as well. RLPF provided a rest/water stop and information on Raquette Lake to the Cycle the Adirondacks bicycle tour. The organizers of the tour made a \$500 donation to the Foundation in return.

In 2016, survey results by SUNY Cortland scientists revealed that VLM was not increasing, but bladderwort (*U. Inflata*) is increasing. The DEC surveyed the RL lean-tos and published a remediation plan. RLPF applied for a Volunteer Stewardship Agreement to maintain RL lean-tos. The APA submitted a plan eliminating lean-to 'clusters', and RLPF submitted a rebuttal. The APA proposal was withdrawn. The DEC revised their plan and now plan to move the lean-tos back in the woods where they can't be seen in accordance with the revised NYS Land Management Master Plan. The DEC released a new AIS Control permit required for the control of AIS in The Park. It was extremely onerous and fundamentally banned matting of AIS! After numerous organizations, Lake Associations and Legislators raised concerns, it was determined by the Region 5 Director it did not apply to us (and a lot of other lakes).

In 2017, we surveyed our membership on the RL Camps WeWork events and continued to work in getting them changed. RLPF wrote a grant request for the AIS hand harvesting efforts in 2017, and 2018, but the Town Board did not meet that month and the required matching funds were lost. We had to raise \$7,500 from our own funds to match the same amount provided by the Town. RLPF published the book "Knowing Raquette Lake" in memory of Mary Gentry. SUNY Cortland continued their aquatic plant surveys with basically the same results as prior years. With RLPF funding of the mats, SUNY placed 8 2mx6m biodegradable mats in Pug Bay to study their effectiveness. We formed a committee to investigate the setting up of a Special Tax District for the long-term funding of our AIS efforts. One of the benefits was perceived to be that NYS would be paying a large share of the funding. The Ranger's house at the corner of County Road #2 (the road to the village) and Route 28 was condemned and is now vacant. The Board felt that this would make an ideal location for a Welcome Center and Public Rest room and that use would be pursued.

In 2018, RLPF discovered that WeWork was applying for a use permit to use the RL Camps as a concert venue pre and post season for the Camps. A letter writing campaign was established to the APA expressing our concerns. The Town of Long Lake Supervisor asked RLPF if we would join a Long Lake effort to get Broadband service to RL. A working group was formed and while the Long Lake approach would not work for Raquette, there were other options that might. RLPF hosted the retired SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry expert on Lake Trout, to spend a day on the water of Raquette to review the Lake Trout habitat. A full study of Raquette's Lake Trout ecology would cost in the neighborhood of \$6,000. The Board decided we couldn't afford it at that time. SUNY Cortland recommended expanded water sampling in multiple sites around the lake and a separate study of bladderwort (especially *U. inflata*) as it continues to expand at their sample sites. SUNY Cortland also entered into discussions with Cornell University to investigate plant restoration in matted areas and other areas that have lost native plants during the last few years. The decision to start a Citizens' Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) water sampling program was made since they produce 'certified' results. Initial discussions with the NYS Department of State (DOS) were held on obtaining a grant for writing a Watershed Management Plan (WMP). One benefit of a WMP is that no matching funds are required for their Environmental Protection Funds (EPF).

In 2019, at the ALA's symposium the 'take-aways' were the Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI) Lake Stewards were now funded through 2022; there were towns and villages setting up special tax districts for AIS control that have little or no state lands; Assemblyman Jones is leading a campaign to force Frontier Communications to provide better service; in Albany the question was officially asked, "Who is responsible for AIS on State land?" the answer is "Us!"; there are 17 watershed coalitions in NYS, RL is in the St Lawrence one. RLPF negotiated the first successful stream AIS harvesting permit given out by the APA and RLPF started harvesting the Marion River; continued our support of SUNY Cortland's research; and applied for and received a grant from the DEC to develop Lake Management Plan (LMP). At the annual meeting in 2019, Gail Morehouse was elected and installed as President.



Officers of RLPF:

President: Ken Hawks  
Gail Morehouse

Vice President: Pat Deyle

Secretary: Lynne Ballou  
Gail Morehouse

Treasurer: Dr Alan Bennett  
Karen Rogers  
Bets Miller  
Bob Rosborough

Board Members: Bob Lefebvre  
Lynne Ballou  
Dick Gentry  
Harvey York  
Jim Colligan  
John Merriman  
Marion Goethals  
Len Schantz  
Kevin Norris