

Borough of Mountain Lakes Launches Lake and Watershed Management Program with Funding from NJ Highlands Council

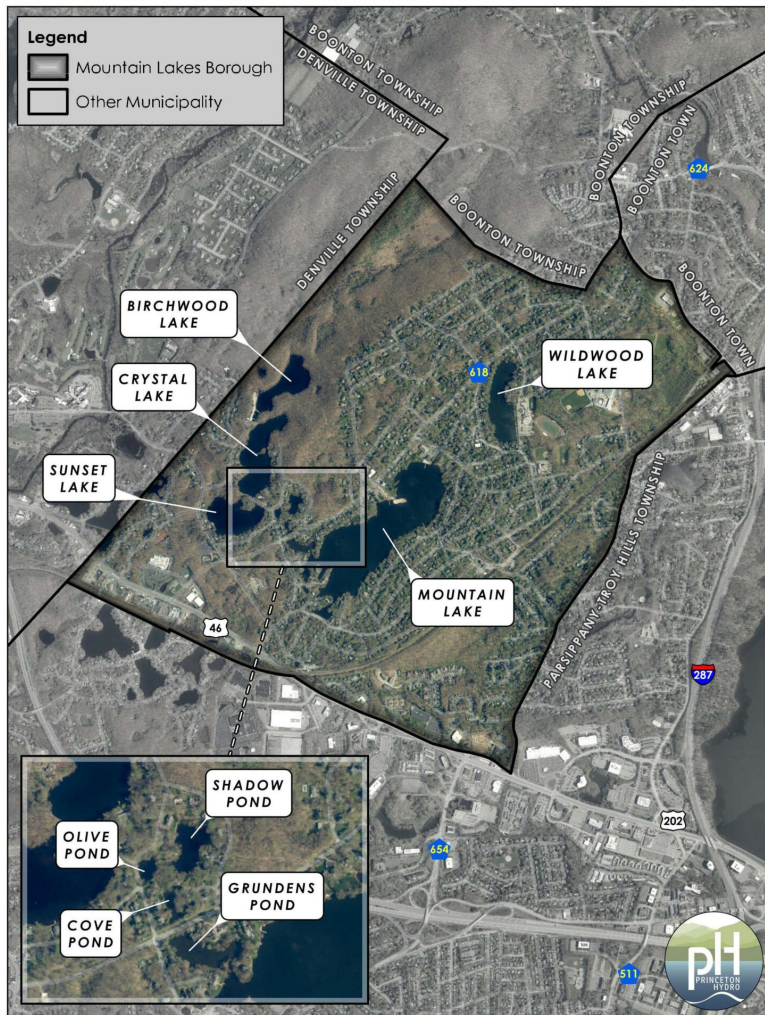
Content from Princeton Hydro website.

The Borough of Mountain Lakes has received grant funding from

the **New Jersey Highlands Council** to develop a comprehensive Lake and Watershed Management Plan for nine lakes within the Borough. To lead this effort, the Borough engaged Princeton Hydro, a leader in ecological and engineering consulting. The initiative will focus on characterizing hydrologic and nutrient dynamics within the Borough's lake systems and watersheds to guide targeted water quality improvement and management strategies.

“Mountain Lakes takes great pride in our lakes, which play an important role in defining our community. Through our partnership with the Highlands Council and Princeton Hydro, we're taking a proactive, data-driven approach to protecting both the environmental and recreational value of our lakes and waterways, with the goal of preserving these vital natural resources for generations to come,” **said Borough of Mountain Lakes Manager Mitchell Stern.**

A selection process was undertaken by the Borough of Mountain Lakes, Princeton Hydro, and the New Jersey Highlands Council to define the scope of this Lake and Watershed Management Program. In accordance with Policy 1L2 and Objective 1L2a of the NJHC Regional Master Plan, which establish lake management tiers and prioritize lakes greater than 10 acres for protection and management, nine lakes were selected for the study: Birchwood Lake, Crystal Lake, Wildwood Lake, Sunset Lake, Mountain Lake, Shadow Pond, Olive Pond, Grundens Pond, and Cove Pond. These lakes represent the waterbodies in the Borough and were chosen to ensure the program focuses on areas with the greatest potential impact on **water quality**, watershed function, and community value.



Princeton Hydro's work will include watershed modeling, hydrologic and pollutant load analyses, and in-lake and watershed-based water quality monitoring. Once the data is analyzed, Princeton Hydro will develop a General Assessment Report that identifies the primary drivers of eutrophication and outlines a prioritized set of management strategies to effectively

reduce nutrient loading and enhance long-term lake health.

“The regional, science-based approach to lake and watershed management has proven to be a powerful tool for municipalities in the Highlands Region,” **said Christopher Mikolajczyk, CLM, Senior Manager of Aquatics at Princeton Hydro, Certified Lake Manager, and lead designer for this initiative.** “We’re excited to collaborate with Mountain Lakes to help identify cost-effective, data-driven strategies that will enhance water quality throughout the watershed and help safeguard these treasured natural resources.”

The New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council) is a regional planning agency that partners with municipalities and counties in the Highlands Region to promote proactive watershed protection. Established under the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act of 2004,

the Council has funded numerous water-quality-related planning initiatives.

Historically, municipalities and private lake associations have managed water quality issues independently. However, taking a coordinated, watershed-based approach enables communities to more effectively address pollution sources, improve water quality, and prevent the spread of invasive species and **harmful algal blooms**.

Mountain Lakes joins several other Highlands region municipalities that have received Highlands council funding to implement similar lake and watershed management initiatives. In 2019, the **Borough of Ringwood** became the first municipality in New Jersey to adopt a regional, public-private approach to lake management, partnering with four lake associations across six lakes. Since the completion of the Ringwood plan, NJDEP has funded recommendations from the plan. This model has since inspired

additional projects, including watershed assessments for **West Milford Township, Rockaway Township, Byram Township, Vernon Township,** and **Somerset County Parks Commission.** Princeton Hydro worked with each agency to develop the respective scope of work to secure grant funding from the Highlands Council.



Photo from the Borough of Mountain Lakes.