

BOROUGH OF MOUNTAIN LAKES, NJ
LAKES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monthly Meeting Minutes – Quick Notes
Minutes for September 1, 2026 at 7:30 PM - Zoom

1. Call to Order

A monthly meeting of the Lakes Management Advisory Committee was held on September 1, 2026 on Zoom teleconference. It began at 7:30 PM and was presided over by chairperson Derek Jackson.

2. Attendees

Voting Members in attendance: Alpesh Amin, Debra Dewing, Lucien Foster, Andy Hilton, Derek Jackson, Jason Miner, Wayne Roth

Non-voting Members in attendance: Tom Menard (Borough Council Liaison), Mitchell Stern (Borough Manager), Bob Schindler (Lentic Ecological), Kelsey Dages (Student Representative), Jason Dimitrov (Student Representative), Scott Minitier (Student Representative)

Members not in attendance: Nikki Riley, Mike Russo, Scott Dubnoff (Environmental Commission Liaison), Gwyneth Buckley (Student Representative), Tyler Kaplan (Student Representative)

Guests in attendance: None

3. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on August 4, 2026 was made by Andy Hilton and seconded by Debra Dewing.

4. Borough Management Report

Report was presented by Mitchell Stern.

Highlands Council Grant & Princeton Hydro Study

- Grant & Schedule Status: The Princeton Hydro study was divided into two phases to align with Highlands Council funding availability. Phase I is anticipated to be substantially complete within the next month. Princeton Hydro will submit a funding application for Phase II once ready or needing the funding to proceed.
- Funding Contingency: Highlands Council awards grants on a monthly cycle. Borough management has no reason to believe Phase II will not be funded given the scope was developed jointly with the Highlands Council. In the event funding is delayed or denied, the Borough has set aside contingency funds to ensure project continuity.

Dam Maintenance & Water Level Adjustments

- Birchwood Dam: The Borough is awaiting NJDEP approval on the submitted repair plan. If accepted as submitted, the lake will not need to be lowered. NJDEP turnaround time is expected to be faster than prior timelines for Grunden's Pond Dam due to differences in risk assessment and severity. Once approved, project plans will be finalized and issued for public bidding (typically a multi-week process).

- Grunden's Pond Dam: We are continuing to await NJDEP approval for the Grunden's Pond scope. Our engineers believe we may hear in a similar time window as Birchwood Lake.
- Cove Pond Dam: Recent inspection of Cove Pond indicates water levels have restored naturally, suggesting the previously reported low levels may have been a natural occurrence rather than a structural dam leak.

Birchwood Lake Stationary Dock Repairs

- Scope & Timeline: The project consists of structural repairs and complete re-decking (expected 20+ year lifespan). Funding was fully allocated upfront to permit immediate execution should a lake drawdown occur.
- Execution Strategy: Work is scheduled to begin this fall/winter with completion targeted before Spring 2027. Work will be staged so that any potential delays will not cause dock closures during the swim season. A lake drawdown is not currently required for this scope.

Fall Hydroraking Scope & Schedule:

- A fixed amount was allocated in the 2026 budget planning process which will likely provide about 3 weeks of work. The scope can be jointly influenced by Borough staff and the committee.
- Recommended Focus Areas (from Lentic Ecological):
 - Birchwood Lake (Week 1): Prioritize extending the historically targeted area further north to preserve or restore additional open water, with a goal of removing the invasive Water Chestnut plants far into the northern section.
 - Sunset Lake (Week 2): Continue clearing near the new fishing dock and other shallow water areas.
 - Wildwood Lake (Week 3): Removal of accumulated organic material at the north end.
- Private Property: Potential outreach to lakefront residents regarding hydroraking localized to private shorelines.
- Additional Observations: Significant aquatic plant growth was noted in the southern coves of Mountain Lake. The Canal exhibited heavy plant growth and shallow depths over the summer. Hydroraking equipment cannot access the Canal. Historical dredging relied on access via parkland and private properties. It appears that the Mountain Lakes Club cleared sand near the mouth of the Canal (per Borough request), though recent heavy rainfall and high-water levels may distort the perception of recovered depth.

Lakefront Encroachment Ordinance Enforcement:

- The Borough intends to actively enforce ordinances regarding unpermitted lakefront encroachments (beaches, jetties, docks). Sand beaches are classified as encroachments in Chapter 137. The ordinances have never allowed for private beaches.
- A boat inspection along Mountain Lake is scheduled for later this month to identify violations and issue property owner notifications. Over the next month, the Committee

is asked to consider potential compliant alternatives to suggest to residents at the next meeting.

Partially Submerged Pipe Investigation:

- Investigation into the large floating pipe near the Mountain Lake dam remains pending. Police Chief Bennett will inspect the site in-water as weather permits.

5. Lentic Ecological Report

Report was presented by Bob Schindler.

Water Chestnut Infestation at Birchwood Lake:

- A highly invasive Water Chestnut was detected and treated in the northwest corner of Birchwood Lake ago; additional chemical treatments and targeted hydroraking is recommended. Waterfowl are the presumed vector of introduction.
- Safety Concerns: The spiky seeds can penetrate footwear and pose a hazard to swimmers, making complete eradication critical to ensure the current recreational uses of the lake.
- Action Item: A potential committee, student and resident volunteer hand-pulling project was discussed and proposed for the Spring; student member Jason Dimitrov volunteered to assist.

Water Primrose Treatment: Application scheduled in the coming days/weeks, weather permitting.

Aeration Systems: The Birchwood Lake aeration systems are currently non-operational. Further diagnostic investigation is required.

Sunset Lake Vegetation: Severe water lily growth was observed this summer, likely attributed to low water conditions during the dam construction drawdown.

6. Old Business

Social Media & Communication: The high school students expressed a desire to continue with the social media campaigns started during the 2025-2026 school year. Per Borough guidance, all committee content and public updates must be routed through official Borough communication channels. There will be additional conversations with the students to plan this out.

Lakefront Homeowner Mailing: No resident feedback or responses received to date.

Pamphlets: Printed copies of the "*Preserving Our Lakes*" pamphlet (Oct 2025) are now available to the public at Borough Hall.

7. New Business

- Introduction of Student Members (2026–2027):
 - Kelsey Dages (Returning member)
 - Scott Minitier (Returning member)
 - Jason Dimitrov (New)
 - Gwyneth Buckley (Returning member - Absent)
 - Tyler Kaplan (New but absent)

- Dam Safety & Debris Prevention: Member Jason Miner reported retrieving a lost paddleboard from the Mountain Lake dam and recommended evaluating a debris grate or protective barrier upstream of the structure.
- Upcoming Presentation to Borough Council:
 - Date/Time: September 14, 2026 at 7:00 PM (Presentation scheduled for ~7:15 PM). Members are encouraged to attend.
 - Action Item: Final slide deck must be submitted by Friday to Tom, Melissa, Cara, and Mitchell.
- Water Quality & Waterfowl Management:
 - While official 2026 Goose Count data reflected a year-over-year decline in population, recent laboratory testing showed disproportionately high fecal counts.
 - Committee members observed substantial goose droppings on both public (community) and private beaches, along with high bird concentrations during the early morning hours on Mountain Lake.

8. Announcements

Next meeting October 6, 2026

9. Adjournment

Derek Jackson moved that the meeting be adjourned. Wayne Roth seconded the motion. The motion passed at 8:39 PM.