

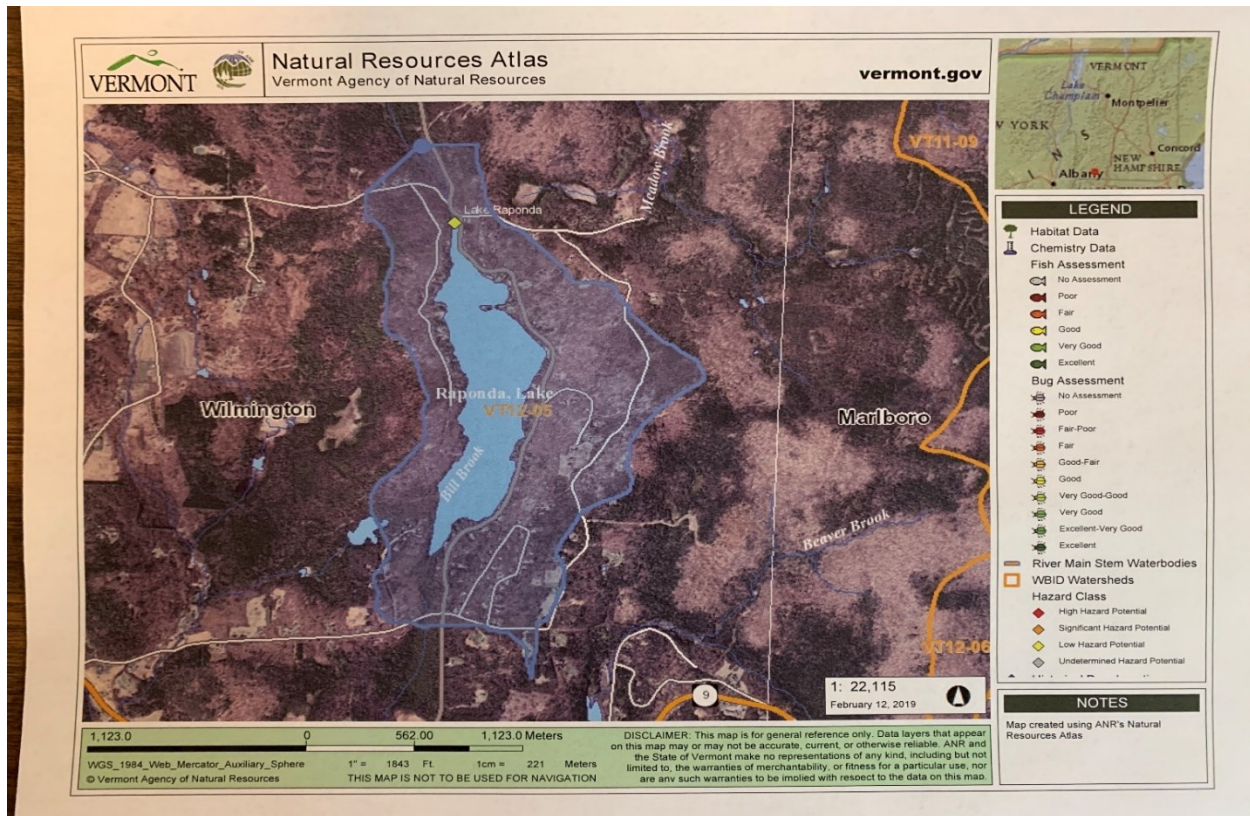
Lake Raconda Greeter Program

2020 Project Completion Report

Program Description:

Located in Wilmington, VT, Lake Raconda is a 121-acre spring fed, warm water lake that is used by Wilmington residents, property owners, their guests and visitors for a variety of recreational purposes. Lake Raconda is publicly accessible via a State boat launch area at the northern end of the lake as well as via the Town of Wilmington's swimming, beach, and picnic area on the lake's east side. Although the beach is restricted to Town of Wilmington residents, property owners and their guest, the State's boat launch is open to the general public; which include neighboring communities like Whitingham that have recorded invasive species in Lake Sadagwa; as well as boaters from all of Vermont and elsewhere. 2020 saw a significant increase in the number of visitors to Lake Raconda, perhaps due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

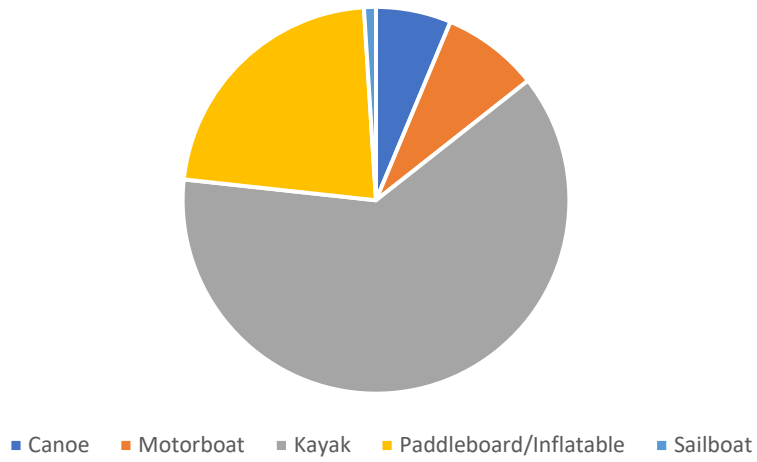
Raconda is at risk for infestation by invasive species that include—but are not limited to—Eurasian watermilfoil, Variable watermilfoil, Water chestnut, Curly-leaf pondweed, Hydrilla, Zebra mussels, Asian clams, and Spiny water flea. The Lake Raconda Association (LRA: <http://raconda.org>) is a group of Wilmington residents and property owners with homes on or near the lake. The LRA partnered with the Town of Wilmington and the Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District to implement a greeter program for the 2020 season. This is the fourth year that the program has operated, but the first year that the conservation district has served in an administrative capacity. The goal of the program continues to be protecting Lake Raconda from aquatic invasive species by: 1) Educating the public and the boats that could potentially introduce invasive species; and 2) Monitoring, gathering data, and inspecting boats entering Lake Raconda.



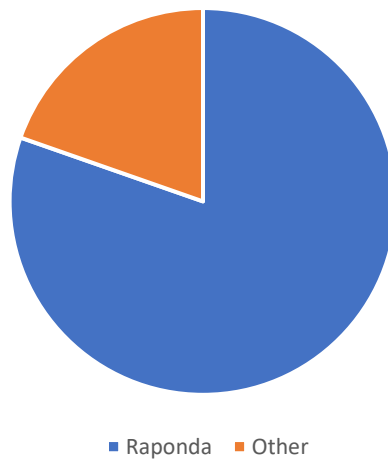
The 2020 Lake Raponda Greeter Season was staffed with paid greeters from Friday, July 12th until Monday, September 7th, Labor Day. Paid greeters were present Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays throughout the season. The program was able to add half-day paid greeter shifts on Thursdays and Mondays starting in July thanks to additional financial support provided by the Lake Raponda Association. The program utilized three paid greeters for the 2020 season, which allowed for greater scheduling flexibility. Members of the LRA also contributed at least 93.75 hours of volunteer greeting throughout the 2020 season.

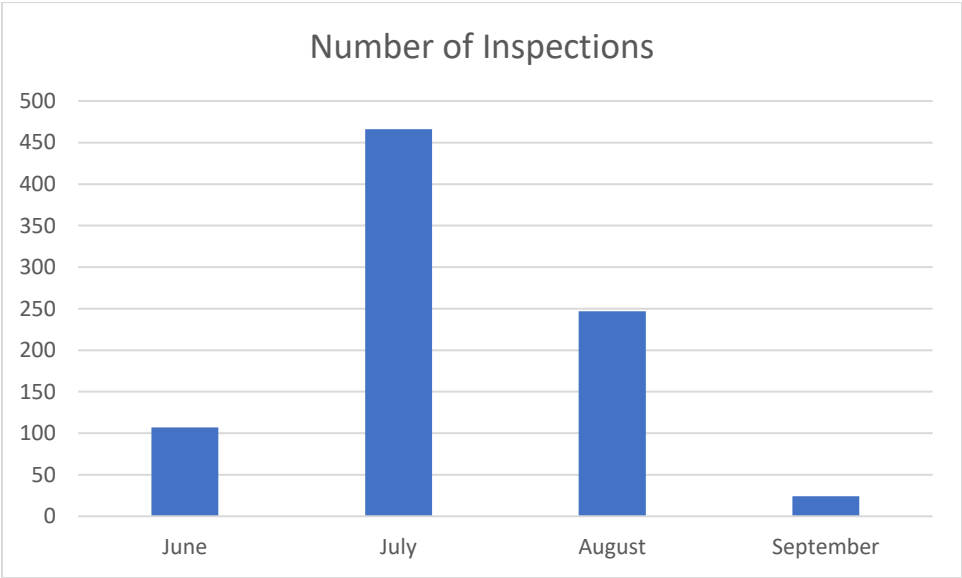
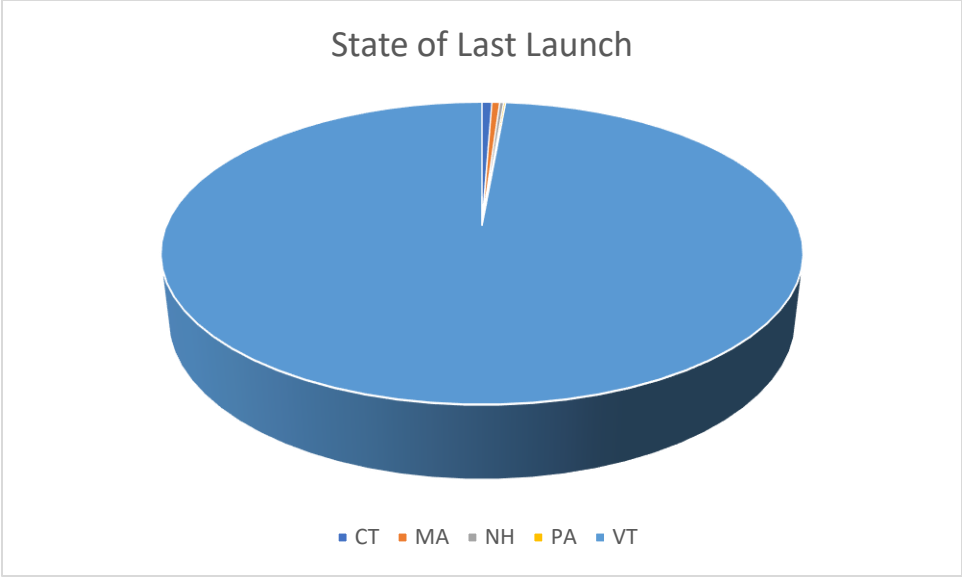
Paid and volunteer greeters conducted 846 inspections over the course of 547.5 hours in the 2020 season. This represented a decline of ~25% in both inspections and hours, suggesting that visitation remain consistent between the 2019 and 2020 seasons, despite anecdotal evidence of increased traffic. Happily, no invasive species were encountered during inspections. One unknown species was removed during an inspection and given to the game warden. Unfortunately, we were unable to learn more about the identification of this sample.

Launch by Watercraft Type



Waterbody of Last Launch





Month Number of Inspections

June	107
July	466
August	247
September	24

Type Launch by Watercraft Type (percent)

Canoe	6.3
Motorboat	8.1
Kayak	62.4
Paddleboard/Inflatable	22.3
Sailboat	1

Waterbody of Last Launch

Raponda	675
Other	165

Funding	2020	2019
Aquatic Nuisance Control Grant-in-aid Grant	\$5,508.50	\$5,876.00
Lake Raponda Association	\$1912.48	\$1,763.05
1% Local Option Tax Fund	\$500	\$1,763.05
Total Funds	\$7,920.98	\$9,402.10
Hard Cost	\$7,920.98	\$9,402.10
In-Kind	\$5686.55	\$4,771.60
Total	\$13,607.53	\$14,173.70

Problems Encountered

1. Funding Challenges – due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, funding from the State of Vermont was reduced by roughly \$800 from 2019 to 2020. Funding provided by the Town of Wilmington was reduced from \$1,763.05 in 2019 to \$500 in 2020. The Lake Raponda Association increased the financial support by \$149.43. Overall, the program had its funding reduced by \$1,926.62 from 2019 to 2020.
2. Delayed Start – Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the 2020 season started later than in previous years. Delayed notification of funding from the State prevented us from implementing the

program on schedule. We had reduced time to advertise for, interview, hire and train greeters in 2020 as a result.

3. Lack of In-Person Training- Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the required greeter training was offered online only. This was a particular challenge for the Lake Raponda program, as two of our three paid greeters were completely new to this work. We did supplement this training with some in-person training with our other greeters, at our own cost.
4. Lack of Experienced and Qualified Applicants – We only had three applicants to work as greeters in 2020. We hired all three in order to provide greater scheduling flexibility. New greeters require considerable oversight and training to be successful.

Major Successes

1. Thanks to the financial and volunteer support of the Lake Raponda Association we were able to provide coverage throughout the season on most days, despite the reduction in funding. This is a testament to the LRA and their commitment to protecting the watershed.
2. Boaters were generally very positive and supportive of the greeter program at Lake Raponda. We did not have many challenges with compliance. This speaks to the important work that the greeter program has done over the past few years to build a relationship with the boating community.
3. The new partnership with the Windham County NRCD allowed for greater scheduling flexibility this year. Two of the greeters hired at Lake Raponda also worked on the Somerset and Harriman Reservoir Greeter Programs at times. It would not have been possible to support the hiring of three greeters without this capacity for sharing staff.



Volunteer Greeters work at the Lake Raponda Boat Launch during the 2020 Season. Photo by Jack Widness