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Protecting Our Water. Educating for the Future.

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A New Understanding Of Development In The Lake George Watershed

By Walt Lender

Lake George Association Executive Director

One of the most critical actions when managing the Lake and watershed – something the Lake George Association has been doing since 1885 – is sharing information and resources so everyone understands the condition of the Lake and understands how their actions affect the conditions.

Sharing information and resources are part of the LGA's DNA: We do that on our Floating Classroom program with students and with adults; We do that with homeowners and municipalities on how to live Lake-Friendly. And we'll do it again on Friday, August 19, at our annual meeting where we'll debut our Lake George Watershed Data Atlas.

The report, supported by the Lake George Association and the Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board and developed by the engineers and staff at Chazen Cos., pulls together data on Lake George development in a way that hasn't been done before.

As you know, the Lake George watershed, at 233 square miles, starts at the top of all of the mountains that surround the Lake and includes the area from there to the shoreline – anywhere water can flow downhill into the Lake.

Anything done in the watershed affects water quality – positively or negatively.

We know that all of the communities around the Lake and in the watershed are fighting the good fight to protect water quality in different ways, and with different tools.

Our data atlas will let them know conditions throughout the whole watershed, in order to begin a dialogue about how best to protect the water from the watershed side. Because there may be 12 towns in the watershed, but there is only one Lake.



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The Data Atlas looks at development in the past 50 years, and also includes a “what if” build out analysis of the watershed (taking into account all the property on slopes, etc., that cannot be developed).

It also contains a variety of facts (including that the approximate assessed value of residential property in the Lake George watershed is \$3.95 billion; and the approximate assessed value of residential property along the Lake George shoreline is \$2.34 billion) that were collected in order to provide a complete picture.

One data point worth noting here: According to the calculations by Chazen, about 9,900 acres of watershed area (8.2% of the total) can be described as disturbed or developed. That is an important number to know and to discuss.

When the municipal review of the data atlas is complete, we will release the entire data set to the public, and the Lake George Association expects to schedule presentations on the data atlas for any town board or planning board that would like one.

We want the document to become a tool for local planners, government officials, researchers, and organizations seeking information in support of planning and water quality related initiatives. This document was also prepared as a way to start a dialogue about land use and future growth within the watershed.

If you are interested, please come to our Annual Meeting Friday, August 19, at 10 AM.

Walt Lender is the executive director of the Lake George Association, which for more than 130 years has been the guardian of Lake George water quality by performing in-the-ground projects to protect Lake George water quality, by investing in recreational and safety programs (including remapping and reinstalling navigational buoy locations) and by educating a generation of watershed residents about the ways they can help keep Lake George clean.