

# Watershed Conservation Project At Echo Lake

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CHARLESTON- In 2024, a lake watershed action plan for Echo Lake was drafted as part of an overall plan to protect the lake from nutrient and sediment runoff getting into the water. A priority project to improve the boat access area was chosen, with a partial design of the project completed. Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District's (OCNRCD) lake watershed program specialist Will Marlier organized an event at the access area this past Monday to mitigate the effects of erosion and stormwater runoff into Lake Echo.

With a team of nine people converging at the access area, there was plenty of work, so they divided into teams. One group added driftwood to a shoreline by the outlet to the lake, securing the wood into the bank to reduce erosion. Another group engaged in buffer plantings, while a third erected a fence around the new vegetation to protect it. The access area was regraded to direct water away from the lake where it filters out sediment before returning to the lake. A drainage ditch also served as a filter, with stone chuck dams

Marlier was involved in the design and implementation of the project. The focus is on lake shore stabilization that prevents waves and foot traffic from causing erosion. Erosion reduces water quality and impacts fish habitat.

"The lakeshore buffer planting will discourage people going into the planting area," Marlier said of the rows of newly planted whips. There are multiple species of plants used in the project ranging from red and sugar maple trees, to tamarack dogwood, and others.

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# Echo Lake

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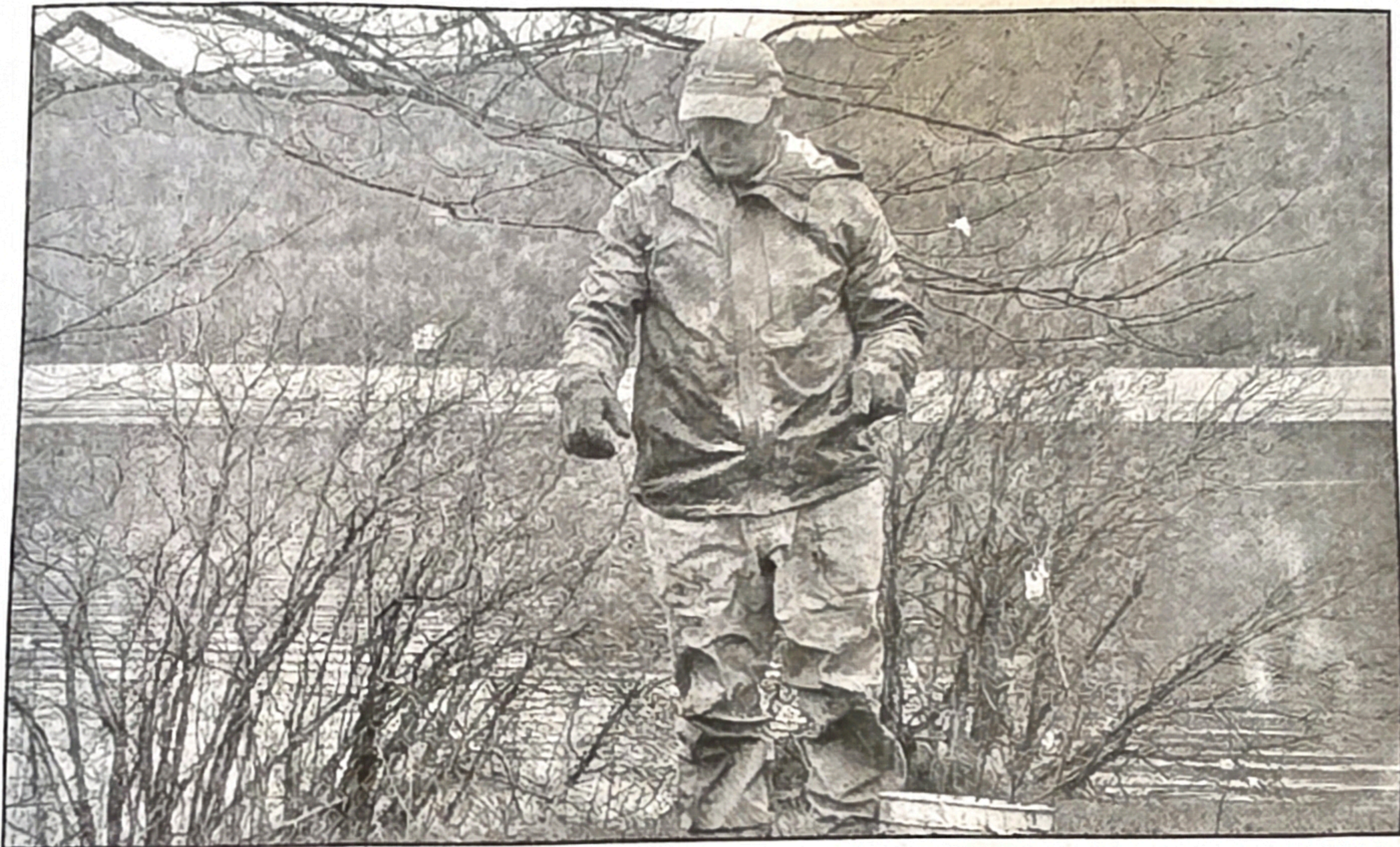
Diversity is important, and using native species reduces the mortality rate, Marlier shared. There will be continued access to the waterfront for swimming. However, Marlier emphasized, swimming at boat access areas is prohibited by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). He said OCNRCD can't change people's habits.

Upon completion of the project, the Echo Lake Protection Association will maintain the plantings. The DFW is responsible for maintaining the sediment catchments.

"This has been a long time in the works," Marlier said. He came onboard with OCNRCD in early 2025, and this is just one project on seven area lakes Marlier has scheduled work for this summer.

The work is a collaborative effort between OCNRCD, the Memphremagog Watershed Association (MWA), KMCS Excavating, and the NorthWoods Stewardship Center.

The Echo Lake Preservation Association has been working in collaboration with MWA and OCNRCD for several years to develop the lake watershed action plan. Streams feeding into the Seymour Lake and Echo Lake watershed, public roads,



*Ted Seddell, the riparian lands manager at Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District planting a variety of trees at the Echo Lake boat access. (Photo by Ed Barber)*

private driveways, and the shorelines, were examined to pinpoint areas which have an adverse impact on water quality. Through the development of a plan of action for the lakes, 94 prioritized projects were moved to the top of the list. Twenty four projects were specific to Echo Lake.

Four of the projects made the final cut for the first round of improving water quality, two for each lake.

The Echo Lake projects are the DFW boat access area and the West Echo Lake

Road.

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) oversees the lake watershed action plans. The plans assess the impact of land use within the watershed and identifies and prioritizes action plans to mitigate the environmental impact on water quality. The plan focuses on mitigating environmental risks before the water discharges into the lake, which are associated with pollution and habitat degradation.