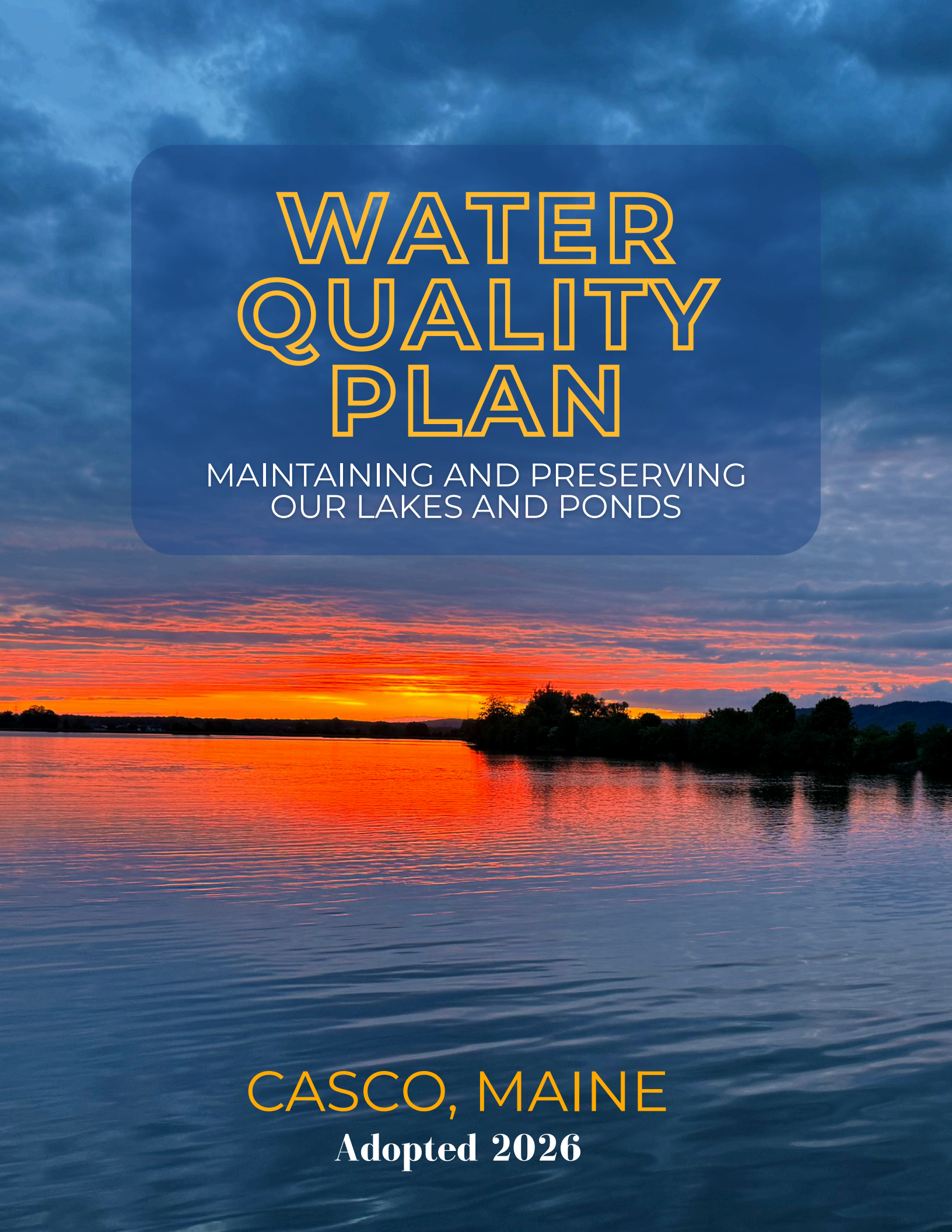


The background of the entire page is a photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sky is filled with dark, blue, and orange clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange glow that reflects on the water's surface. The water is dark blue with ripples. In the distance, there are silhouettes of trees and land. A semi-transparent blue rounded rectangle is positioned in the upper half of the image, containing the title and subtitle text.

WATER QUALITY PLAN

MAINTAINING AND PRESERVING
OUR LAKES AND PONDS

CASCO, MAINE

Adopted 2026

Introduction

This Water Quality Plan was drafted as a result of an action by the Casco Selectboard and the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (CPIC) to address one of the top priorities of the Comprehensive plan: **to maintain the Water Quality of the lakes and ponds of the town of Casco Maine**. Rivers, streams, wetlands, and aquifers, while critical, will be addressed in future updates to this plan.

In order to address the quality of Casco's water resources in accordance with the comprehensive plan, this plan lays out the **implementation and methodologies** to maintain and improve the quality of our water resources as the town grows and evolves.

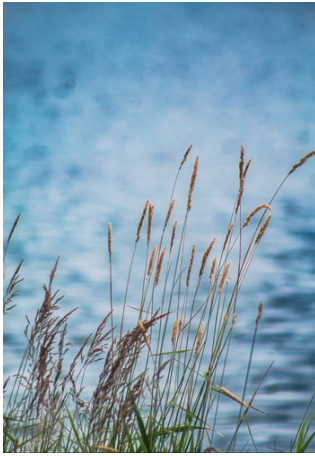
This document was a collaborative effort by the dedicated members of the Water Quality Committee: Tom McCarthy, James Arsham, Diane Cormier, Pam Edwards, Maggie Monarch, Levi Thornton and Eileen Tidd.

The visual identity that brings their hard work to life was designed by Courtney Walsh of Coco Walsh Creative, LLC.

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Purpose

The purpose of the plan is to maintain and improve the water quality of all water resources in Casco.

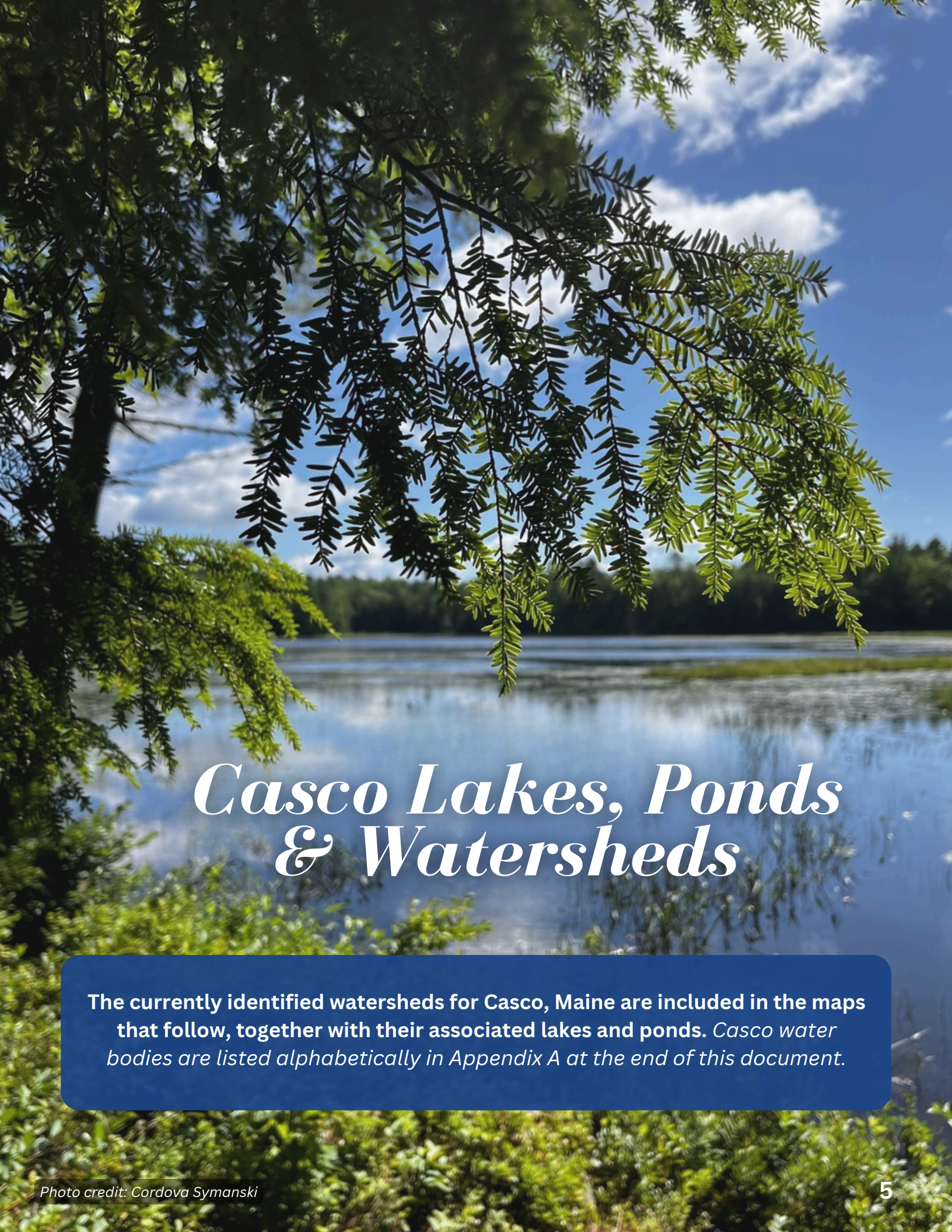
The plan will serve as a road map for the work of the Casco Water Quality Committee (CWQC) for the town of Casco Maine. The Committee's focus shall be to coordinate with and support the local lake associations, and collaborate with other organizations involved with protecting water quality in Maine. It will also serve as support to the CEO, Planning Board, and Select Board by providing reviews, research, assessments and recommendations for actions related to water quality including shoreland zone permits, ordinance changes, or any project in Casco that may impact water quality.

The Committee's initial focus will be implementation of the recommendations in the plan and to establish the methodologies that the Committee will use in meeting the goals of maintaining and/or improving the water quality of our water resources.

In addition, the Committee will work closely with our neighboring towns where we share water resources.

Major Recommendations

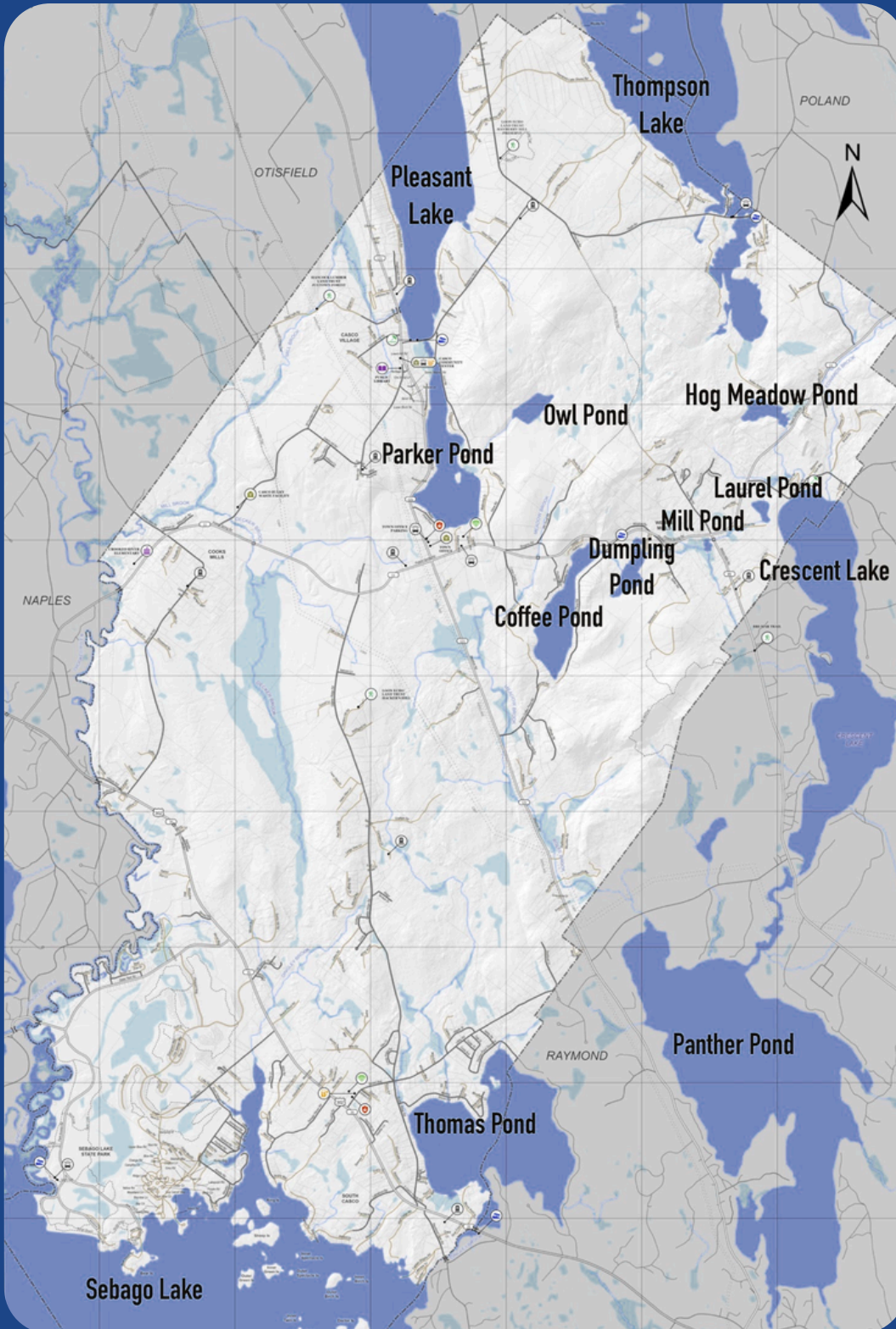
- 1.** Have town staff immediately **notify the Committee** of any permits within shoreland zones.
- 2.** **Make recommendations** to the Selectboard, Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (CPIC), Planning Board, and the CEO after reviewing any plans, projects and permits that have the potential to impact Casco Water Quality.
- 3.** **Form** a Water Quality Ordinance Task Force to coordinate ordinance work and integrate it into other ordinance update plans.
- 4.** **Task** the Water Quality Committee with making recommendations for the annual water quality budget line item.



Casco Lakes, Ponds & Watersheds

The currently identified watersheds for Casco, Maine are included in the maps that follow, together with their associated lakes and ponds. *Casco water bodies are listed alphabetically in Appendix A at the end of this document.*

Lakes & Ponds



Coffee Pond
Crescent Lake
Dumpling Pond
Hog Meadow
Pond
Laurel Pond
Mill Pond
Owl Pond
Panther Pond
Parker Pond
Pleasant Lake
Sebago Lake
Thomas Pond
Thompson Lake

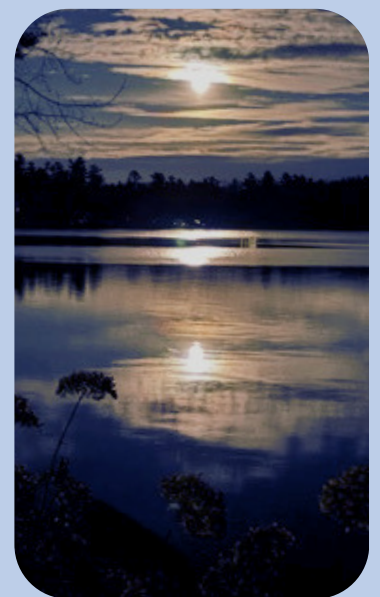
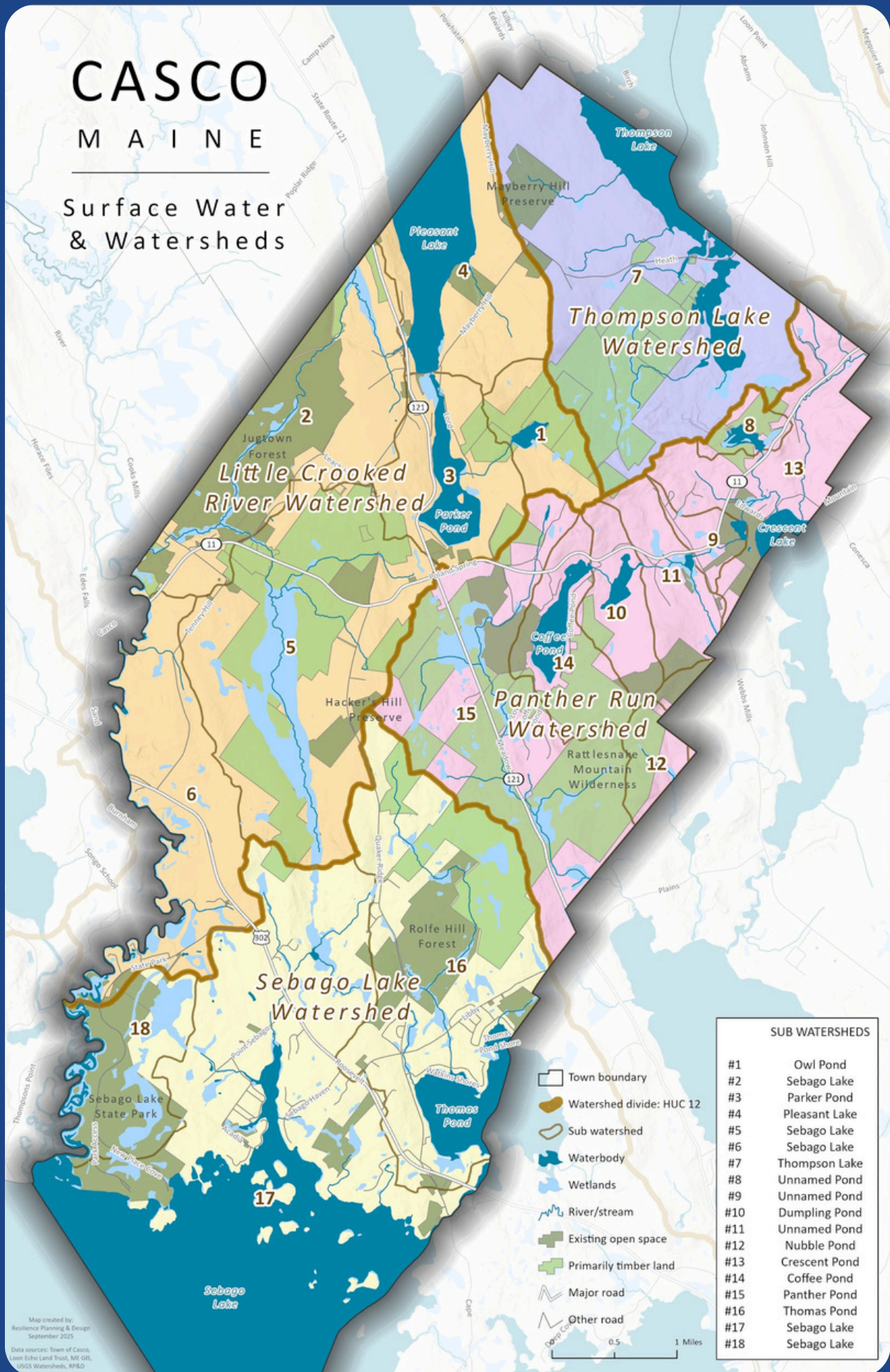


Photo credit: Diane Cormier

CASCO

MAINE

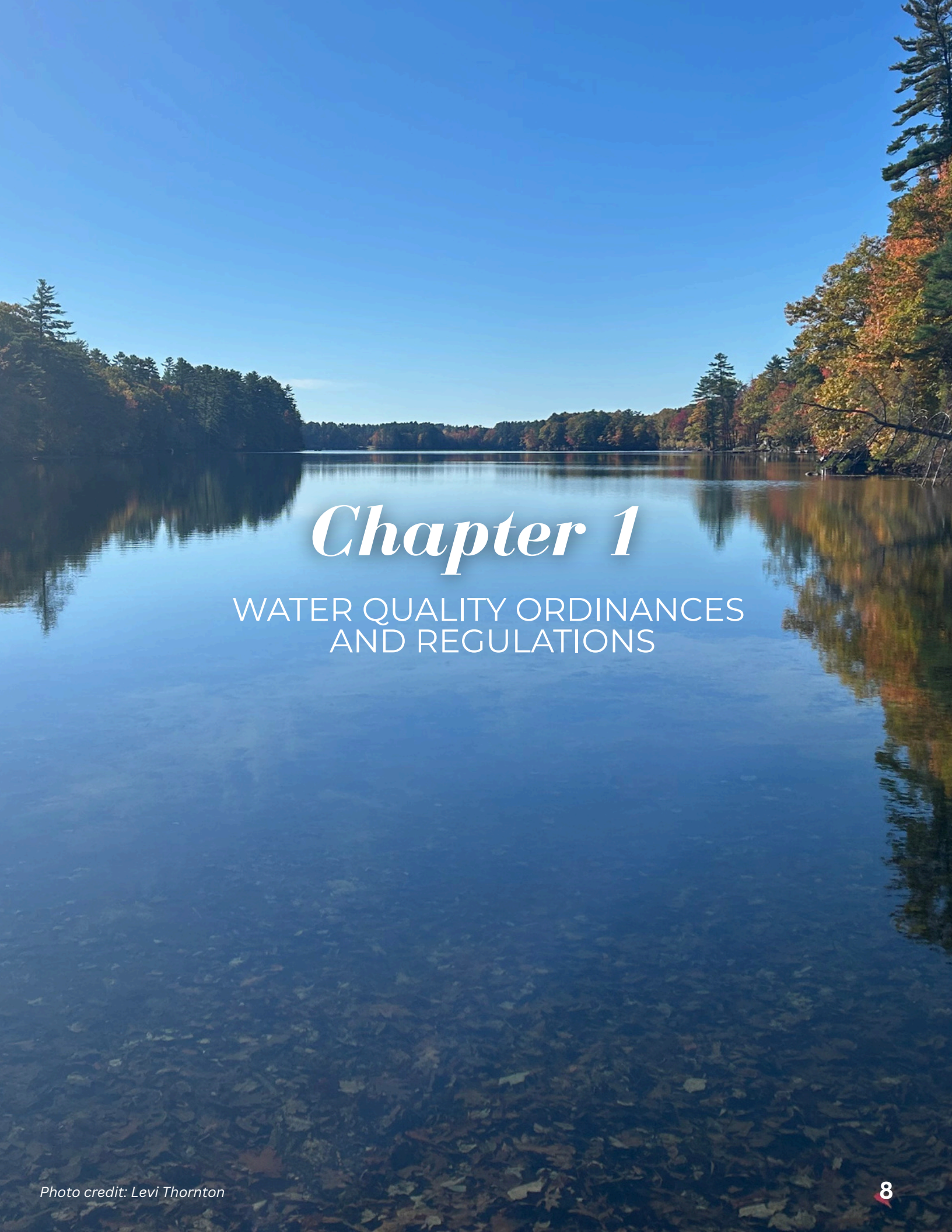
Surface Water & Watersheds



SUB WATERSHEDS

- #1 Owl Pond
- #2 Sebago Lake
- #3 Parker Pond
- #4 Pleasant Lake
- #5 Sebago Lake
- #6 Sebago Lake
- #7 Thompson Lake
- #8 Unnamed Pond
- #9 Unnamed Pond
- #10 Dumping Pond
- #11 Unnamed Pond
- #12 Nubble Pond
- #13 Crescent Pond
- #14 Coffee Pond
- #15 Panther Pond
- #16 Thomas Pond
- #17 Sebago Lake
- #18 Sebago Lake

Map created by:
Resilience Planning & Design
September 2023
Data sources: Town of Casco,
Loon Echo Land Trust, MIT GIS,
USGS Watersheds, NPS

A wide-angle photograph of a calm lake. The water is a deep blue, reflecting the clear sky above. The shoreline is lined with trees, some of which have vibrant autumn foliage in shades of orange, yellow, and red. The reflection of the trees and the sky is clearly visible in the still water. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

Chapter 1

WATER QUALITY ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS

Objective

Casco's lakes and streams face pressures from shoreline development, stormwater runoff, septic systems, and land clearing. While local ordinances and regulations exist to help manage these impacts, *their enforcement and adequacy are not always clear.*

Proactively reviewing, updating, and enforcing ordinances is essential to ensure long-term water quality protection across all of Casco's watersheds.

Maine's Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act (MSZA) requires all municipalities to adopt and enforce ordinances regulating land use activities within 250 feet of lakes, ponds, rivers, and wetlands. Casco has implemented these standards, ***but enforcement and ordinance strength vary.***

Casco's shoreland zoning ordinances are grounded in the MSZA framework, *but the town has the authority to adopt stronger standards where necessary.*

Reviewing Casco's ordinances in the context of neighboring municipalities (e.g., Raymond, Naples, Bridgton) **will ensure consistent protections across shared watersheds.** This context underscores Casco's ability to *exceed state minimums* where local water quality data show it is needed.

Goals

The goals for this section of the plan are twofold:

- 1.** **Ensure** that our existing ordinances and regulations are being used, followed, and enforced to the greatest practical extent.
- 2.** **Adopt** additional ordinance and regulation provisions to further protect water quality when appropriate.

Implementation Steps

FOR BOTH GOALS

- a. Identify** which ordinances and regulations most directly affect water quality, including: shore land zoning, site plan review, subdivision review, stormwater/erosion control, septic, wetlands/streams, aquifer protection, canopy management and on-water activities such as headway speed and wakeboat usage.
- b. Use** findings from recent watershed surveys to identify recurring problems (erosion, runoff, septic issues), and assess whether these problems could have been prevented by current ordinances or enforcement.
- c. Build** accountability through ongoing monitoring and public reporting.

Implementation Steps

FOR GOAL 1:

Ensure adequate enforcement of existing ordinances

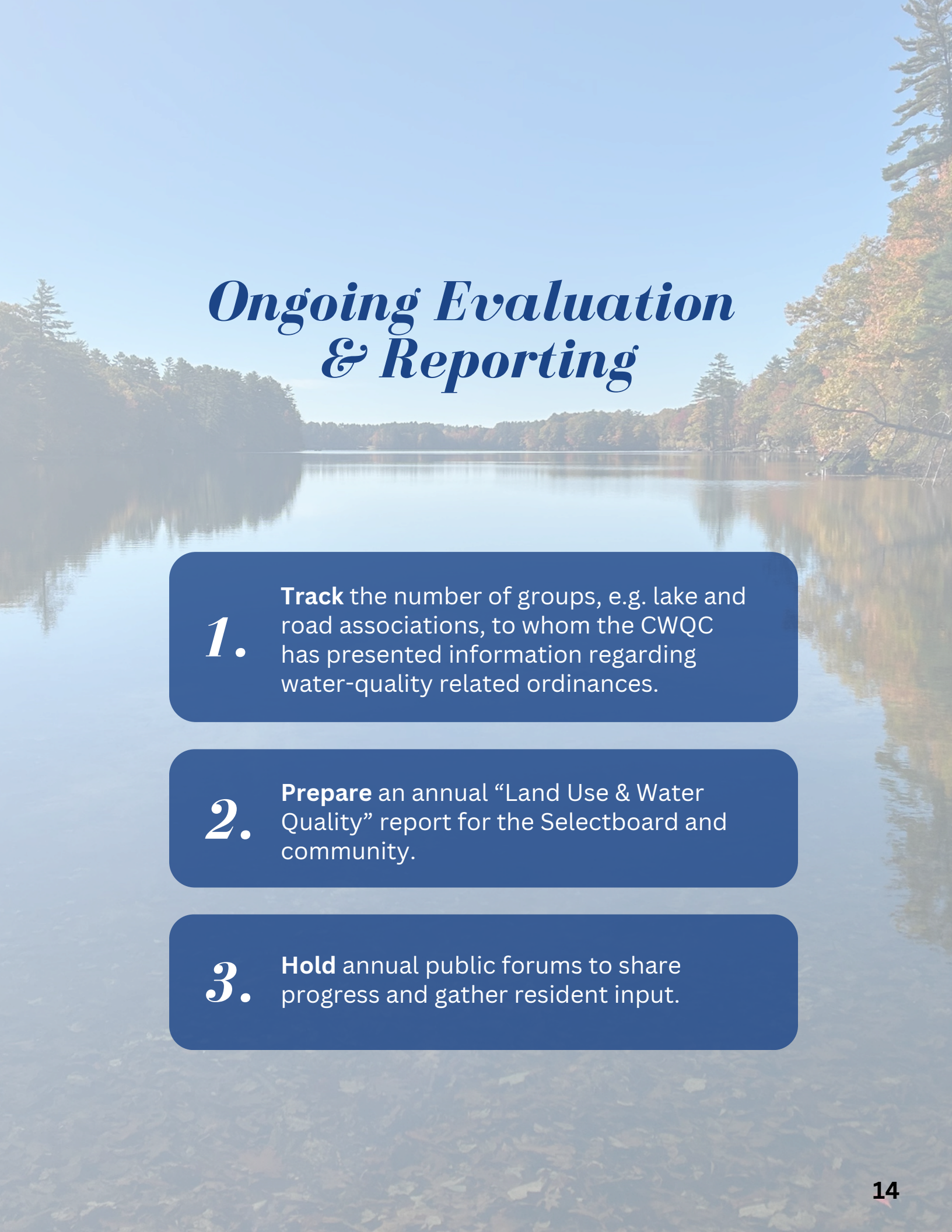
- a.** **Review** all permits requested within the Shoreland Zone, and other permits that have the potential to impact water quality. Provide recommendations to the CEO and Planning Board as appropriate.
- b.** **Track and assess** Shoreland Zone permits and evaluate outcomes.
- c.** **Identify** issues arising from the public's lack of knowledge.
- d.** **Identify** issues arising from inconsistent or insufficient enforcement.
- e.** **Develop** a plan to improve compliance through staffing, training, and public education.
- f.** **Deliver** periodic status updates and recommendations to the Selectboard.
- g.** **Provide** education and outreach to landowners.

Implementation Steps

FOR GOAL 2:

Adopt additional ordinance provisions when appropriate

- a.** **Form** a Water Quality Ordinance Task Force to coordinate this work and integrate it into other ordinance update plans.
- b.** **Compile and review** all relevant Casco ordinances and regulations.
- c.** **Research** other towns' ordinances, processes, and documentation requirements.
- d.** **Gather** scientific studies on the relationship of land use and water quality.
- e.** **Develop** growth strategies that maximize the preservation of forest canopies, other open space, and undisturbed soil and natural vegetation.
- f.** **Draft** Recommendations for Planning Board and Selectboard review.



Ongoing Evaluation & Reporting

1.

Track the number of groups, e.g. lake and road associations, to whom the CWQC has presented information regarding water-quality related ordinances.

2.

Prepare an annual “Land Use & Water Quality” report for the Selectboard and community.

3.

Hold annual public forums to share progress and gather resident input.

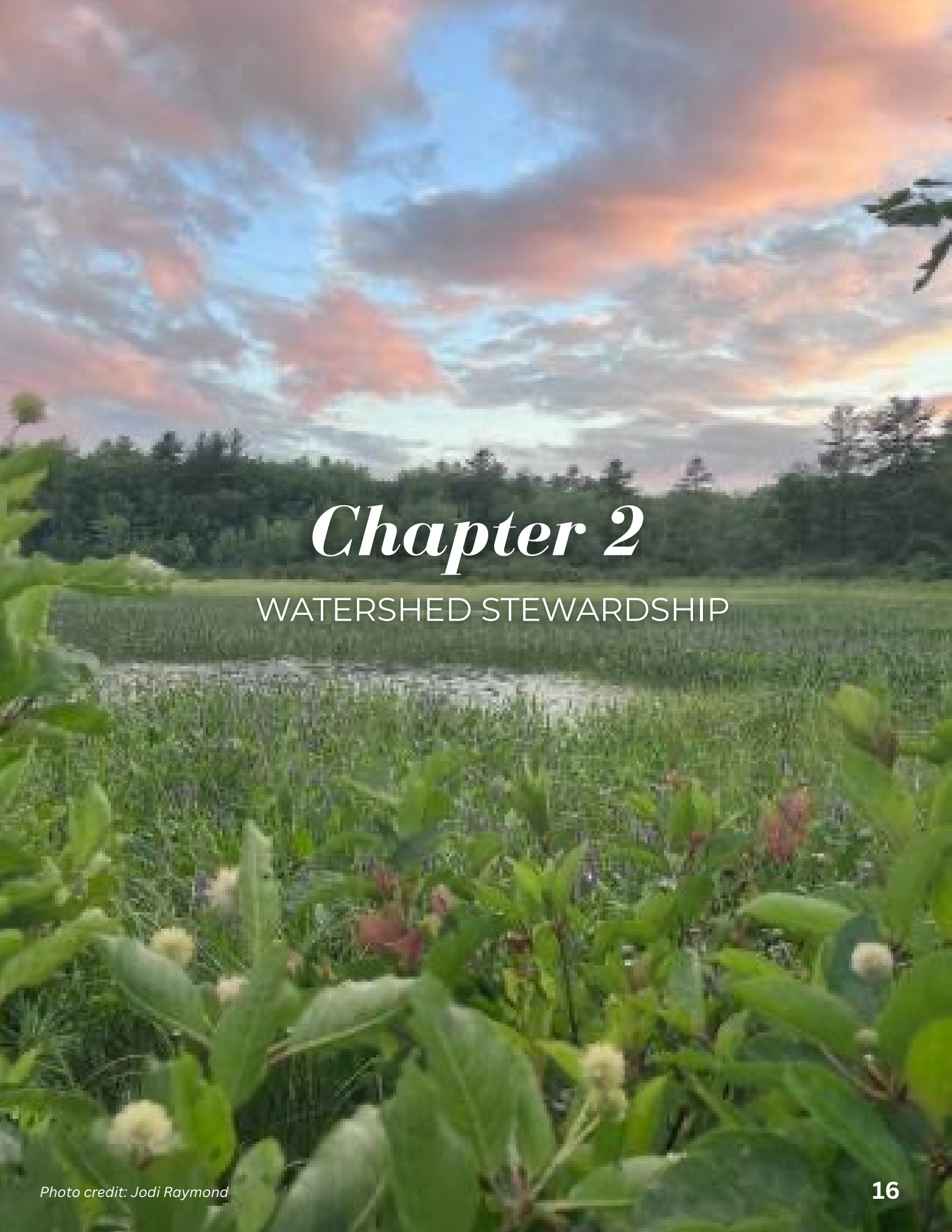


Integration with Watershed Plans

Findings from recent watershed surveys in Casco provide evidence of recurring land use impacts **including road erosion, shoreline vegetation loss, and septic system concerns**. The Land Use Ordinance Task Force will explicitly use these findings when evaluating whether such issues could have been prevented through stronger ordinances or better enforcement.

By grounding ordinance review in real survey data rather than theoretical assumptions, Casco can ensure that updates are data-driven and address on-the-ground conditions.

This approach closes the loop between watershed science and town policy, strengthening long-term protections for water quality.



Chapter 2

WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP

Objective

Casco's lakes, ponds, and rivers are one of the town's most valuable natural assets. Watershed stewardship refers to **protecting, maintaining, and improving the health and function of the town's watersheds.**

A watershed is an area of land that channels rainfall, snowmelt, and runoff into a common body of water such as a river, lake, or pond.

All land areas are within a watershed.

Watershed management is critical for:

- environmental quality
- drinking water
- recreation
- wildlife habitat
- sustainable development



Forest land conservation and forested watersheds provide a positive impact on water quality.

Extensive lake research over several decades demonstrates that it is significantly more effective and economical to prevent destabilization than to attempt its reversal.

Goals

- 1. Preserve or improve** the water quality of our lakes and ponds
- 2. Identify, prevent, and reduce** nonpoint source pollution (NPS)
- 3. Identify, prevent, and reduce** point source pollution
- 4. Implement** best management practices (BMPs) such as erosion control, vegetated buffers, and improved road drainage to reduce runoff.
- 5. Adapt** watershed management to address changing rainfall patterns, warmer temperatures, and more frequent extreme weather events.
- 6. Identify** and involving key stakeholders, promoting cooperation, and providing public education.

Nonpoint Source Pollution (NPS)

occurs when rain, snowmelt, or irrigation runoff picks up pollutants from roads, streams, agricultural, and lawns, and carries them out into water bodies and groundwater. It is diffuse and comes from multiple sources. Common pollutants include excess fertilizers, pesticides, oil, grease, sediment, animal waste, and bacteria.

Point Source Pollution

comes from a single, identifiable source, such as a malfunctioning septic system or a factory smokestack. Septic systems release bacteria, nitrogen, phosphorus, and other contaminants that can leak into our bodies of water. These can fuel the growth of excessive aquatic plants and algae, leading to a degradation in water quality.

Implementation Steps

- 1.** **Promote and aid** in facilitating lake association efforts in watershed surveys.
- 2.** **Identify and engage** representatives from each watershed in Casco (e.g., lake association, road associations, major landowners, etc.).
- 3.** **Create, share and maintain** a "How to do a Watershed Survey" document.
- 4.** **Create** a multi-year implementation schedule (along with the various lake and road associations) in coordination with the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCS&WCD) that will prioritize the implementation of watershed surveys.
- 5.** **Research, create, and share** a guide of potential sources of funding.
- 6.** **Educate** the Lake and Private Road associations on the importance of maintaining gravel roads and driveways and ditches to minimize runoff into the lake. Maintaining or adding woody, vegetative shoreline buffer helps to filter runoff.

Implementation Steps

continued

- 7.** **Work** with lake and road associations to discourage the use of fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides in shoreland areas. *Eliminating these chemicals helps protect water quality and prevents pollution from entering lakes and waterways.*
- 8.** **Consider partnering** with the town government and local hardware stores to ensure that non-polluting options for lawn and yard maintenance are available in their inventory
- 9.** **Review** existing town ordinances regarding septic systems.
- 10.** **Initiate** an inventory of all septic systems within the shoreland zone.
- 11.** **Make** recommendations to the town for additional oversight of septic system inspections within the shoreland zone.
- 12.** **Review** existing ordinances that would apply to watershed protection and suggest appropriate changes.
- 13.** **Work** closely with the Open Space Commission to conserve open space.

Ongoing Evaluation & Reporting

1.

Review the progress of watershed stewardship activities annually at a minimum.

2.

Assess the availability and usefulness of important resources and guides.

3.

Encourage collaboration among local organizations, property owners, and other stakeholders.

4.

Track key activities such as stakeholder engagement, watershed surveys, and implementation of best management practices.

5.

Share updates and recommendations with the Town of Casco officials, the community, and relevant parties to support transparency and continuous improvement.



Chapter 3

TESTING AND INSPECTIONS

Objective

It is fundamental that testing and watchful monitoring of water resources be done on a regular basis. *Doing so is the only way to see the effects of the actions taken in other parts of the Plan.*

We have identified several water quality measures environmental quality which should be performed consistently across water bodies on a regular basis:

- **dissolved oxygen**
- **water temperature**
- **turbidity**
- **phosphorus levels**
- **chlorophyll a**

Most of the work for testing is done by volunteers, but **phosphorus samples** need to be tested at a laboratory for a fee.

See Appendix B for a list of recommended tests and how frequently they should be taken.

There are two additional types of inspections that should be conducted. The first is checking our water bodies for **aquatic invasive species (AIS)** on an annual basis and the second is **Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI)**

Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI) - the inspection of boats, motors, trailers and fishing gear at public boat launches for invasive species to prevent their introduction in the first place.

Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI) are an ongoing cost for lake associations since they are typically conducted by trained and paid inspectors.

Goals

- 1.** **Test** water quality consistently across all Casco lakes and ponds in order to identify and mitigate those issues that arise from degraded water quality.
- 2.** **Eliminate or mitigate** the impact of aquatic invasive species.

Implementation Steps

- 1.** **Establish** minimum requirements for testing water quality and checking for invasive plant species, in conjunction with local lake associations.
- 2.** **Collect, document, and analyze** testing data.
- 3.** **Take action** to mitigate issues found.
- 4.** **Coordinate** Lake Associations across Casco and other appropriate organizations to address CBI effectiveness and efficiencies
- 5.** **Request** that lake associations track and evaluate CBI coverage at all public boat launches and report findings back to the CWQC.
- 6.** **Ensure** that lake associations are familiar with available training and grant sources for testing and inspections.
- 7.** **Research** testing equipment, determine what equipment each lake association has, and purchase or rent equipment that could be shared with multiple lake associations.
- 8.** **Provide** volunteers to conduct necessary water quality testing for lakes without formal associations.

Ongoing Evaluation & Reporting

- 1.** **Track and map** the locations of aquatic invasive species.
- 2.** **Report** on effectiveness of CBI programs.
- 3.** **Assess** the level of collaboration between CWQC and lake associations. Make recommendations to strengthen as appropriate
- 4.** **Report** testing and inspection status to relevant parties (selectboard, lake associations, etc.) on an annual basis.



Chapter 4

SHORELINE CONDITION DOCUMENTATION

Objective

To create a **consistent, long-term visual record of Casco's lakes and ponds**. This record supports water quality protection, adherence to Maine's Shoreland Zoning regulations, and informed decision-making.

Regular photographic documentation enables the Town, the Planning Board, the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO), and lake associations:

- **to monitor shoreline conditions**
- **evaluate the impacts of development**
- **identify erosion or vegetation changes that could affect water quality.**

Goals

1.

Compliance – Ensure adherence to Casco’s Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, requiring pre- and post-construction photographs for all permitted shoreland activities including tree removal permit application in a protected resource.

2.

Monitoring – Maintain updated visual data to track shoreline changes, vegetation health, and erosion patterns over time.

3.

Planning – Provide accurate and accessible imagery to support shoreline management strategies, permitting decisions, and grant applications.

4.

Public Engagement – Encourage collaboration with lake associations and volunteers to build community stewardship and shared responsibility for water resource protection.

5.

Review Maine laws on boat wakes. Consider a Casco ordinance on boat wakes and coordinate with state officials for enforcement.

Implementation Steps

- 1. Permit-Required Photos:** Update photo submission requirements for all shoreland zone permit application checklists. Pre-construction photographs must be submitted in accordance with Maine state law, and post-construction photographs within 20 days of project completion.

This approach strengthens applicant accountability and creates a clear visual record of site conditions before and after development, supporting enforcement if needed.

- 2. Photos and Aerial Video from the Water:** Partner with the town, lake associations, community volunteers, and licensed drone pilots to collect shoreline photographs and videos from both water-based and aerial perspectives.

Imagery should be updated regularly to establish a reliable baseline for detecting major shoreline changes. All imagery should be stored on a secure town server for future analysis and reference.

- 3. Watershed Surveys:** When a survey is complete, all photo imagery collected should also be added to the town's secure server providing a snapshot of the water body's shoreline status at the time the survey was conducted.

A watershed survey's photo documentation could also fulfill the recommended regular imagery update.

Ongoing Evaluation & Reporting

Informal Ongoing Review: It is recommended that the Casco Water Quality Committee (CWQC) conduct informal, periodic reviews of shoreline photo documentation throughout the year, and forward findings to the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) and Planning Board.

These reviews can help the Committee

- **stay aware** of emerging shoreline issues
- **observe** developing trends
- **note** whether permit-related photo submissions appear complete.

Regular Review: To maintain a long-range perspective on shoreline conditions, it is recommended that the CWQC, in collaboration with the CEO and the Planning Board, undertake a comprehensive shoreline imagery review at regular intervals.

This broader assessment can

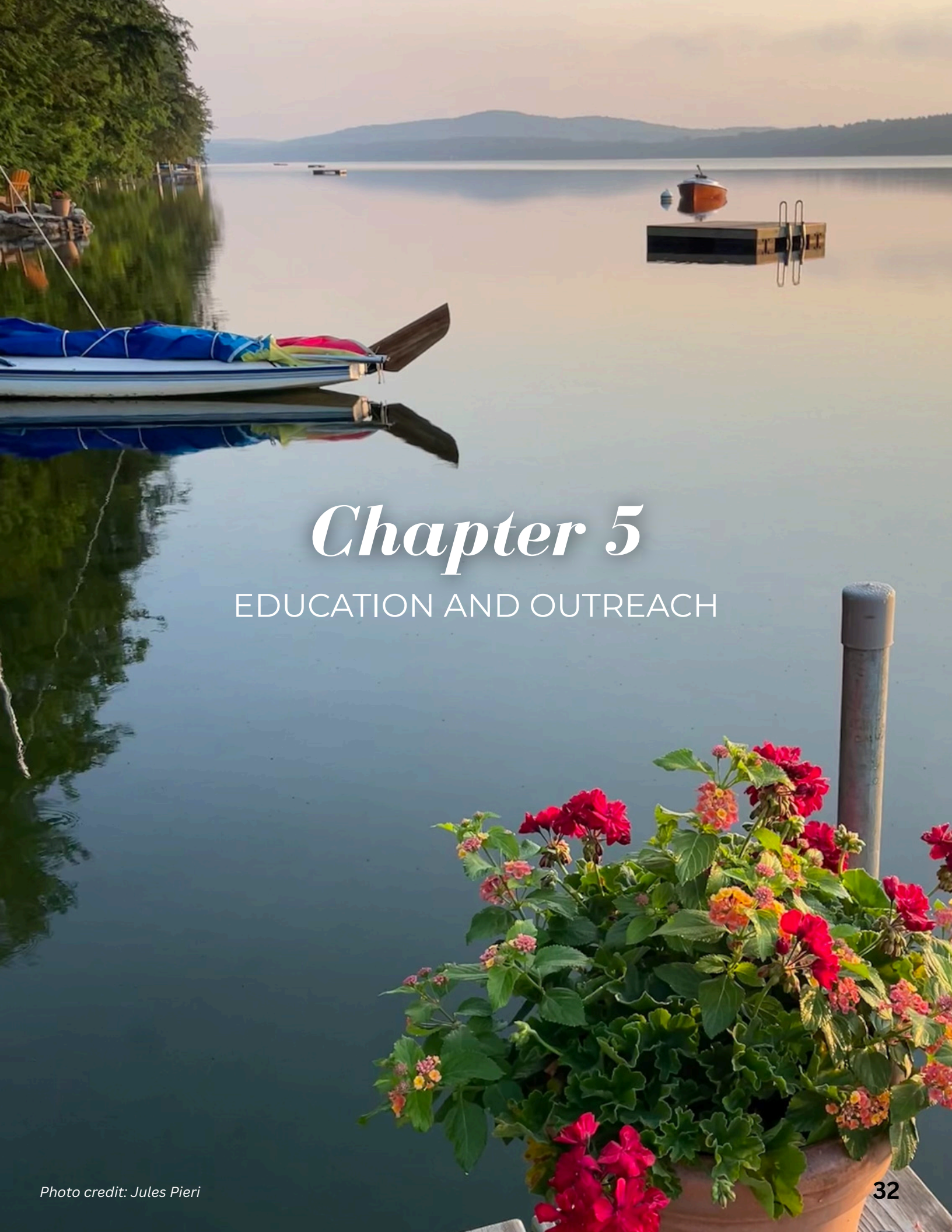
- **help identify** long-term changes
- **highlight** areas experiencing erosion or development pressure
- **support recommendations** for adjusting documentation practices, data management approaches, or enforcement strategies as needed.

Community Feedback: The CWQC is encouraged to seek ongoing input from lake associations, volunteers, and shoreline residents.

Gathering community feedback can

- **improve** documentation methods
- **highlight** priority areas of concern
- **help strengthen** local involvement in shoreline and water-quality protection.

This engagement may also support broader participation in imaging efforts and watershed surveys.



Chapter 5

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Objective

The purpose of the Education and Outreach Program is to inform and engage Casco residents, visitors, seasonal renters, area businesses and all lake users about *protecting the town's water bodies from invasive species, water pollution, and watershed mismanagement.*

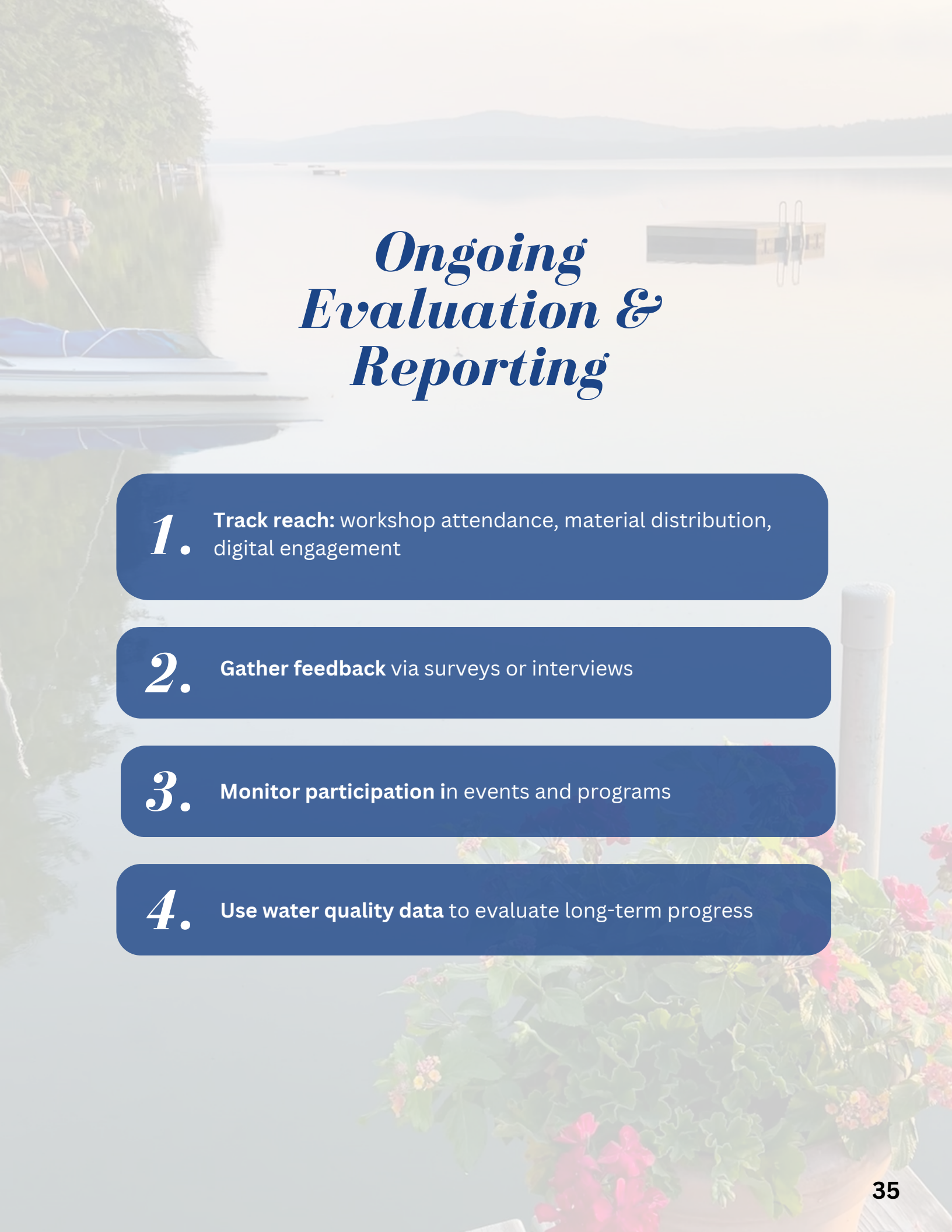
Goals

- 1. Build partnerships** with lake associations, environmental groups, businesses, and schools
- 2. Raise awareness** of threats to water quality and lake health
- 3. Promote stewardship** among residents and recreational users
- 4. Prevent the spread** of invasive species through behavior change
- 5. Encourage compliance** with ordinances and best use practices

Implementation Steps

- 1. Printed Materials:** Fact sheets, rack cards, welcome packets available at town office, library, realtors, and rentals
- 2. Digital Outreach:** Updates via town website and social media, newsletters and seasonal alerts, videos and resources (e.g., LEA's LakeSmart)
- 3. Workshops & Presentations** (in partnership with Maine Lakes, LEA Lake Smart) hosted at town office, schools and public venues.
- 4. Signage & On-Site Education:** Boat launch signs with cleaning protocols, "You're in the Watershed" boundary signs, educational signage at access points and parks
- 5. School Partnerships:** Curriculum integration with science programs, Field trips, guest speakers, hands-on activities, Summer camp or afterschool club content

These steps would be implemented by **volunteers working in partnership with lake associations, town officials, schools, and local businesses.** All content for printed and digital materials, workshops, and signage will be gleaned from the other major sections of this Water Quality Plan.



Ongoing Evaluation & Reporting

1. **Track reach:** workshop attendance, material distribution, digital engagement

2. **Gather feedback** via surveys or interviews

3. **Monitor participation** in events and programs

4. **Use water quality data** to evaluate long-term progress

A full-page background image showing a bright sun setting over a body of water, with its reflection visible. Bare tree branches are silhouetted against the sky in the upper right corner.

Chapter 6

FUNDING AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Objective

Develop sufficient sources of funding to implement the objectives and goals of this plan.

All lakes and ponds in Casco that receive town funding are expected to provide testing results to CWQC and relevant state and local associations **in a timely manner.**

Lake Associations carry the primary burden of maintaining the water quality of their respective water bodies.

They are typically funded through:

- **personal donations**
- **grants**
- **town support**

As such, CWQC will support the associations in procuring funding.

Goals

1. Make recommendations to fund lake associations equitably.

2. Provide resources to lake associations to expand funding from multiple sources.

Ongoing Evaluation & Reporting

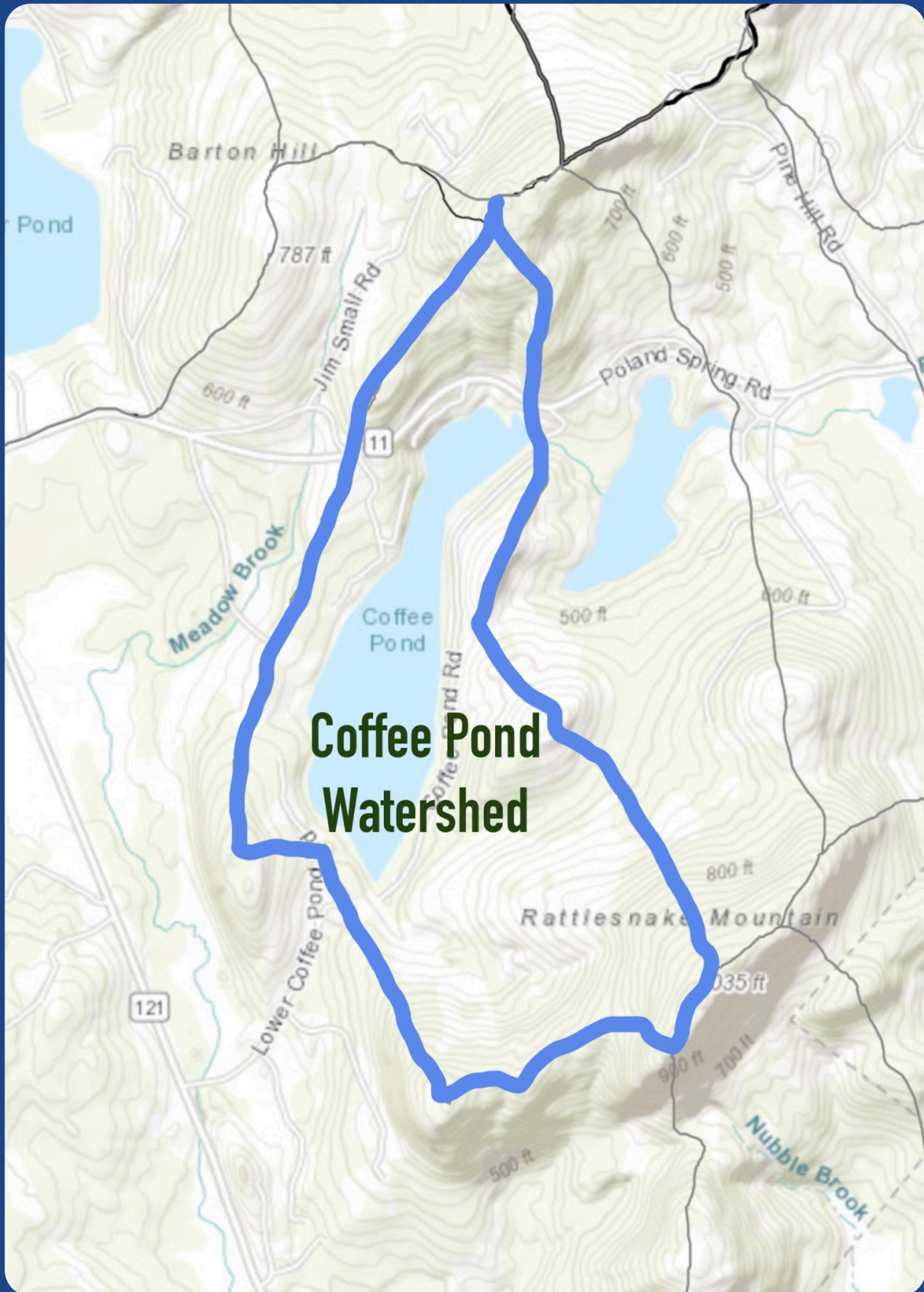
- 1.** **Compile** a list of available grants and distribute to lake associations yearly.
- 2.** **Track** the number of grants requested and received by the lake associations.
- 3.** **Report** on the collaborations with lake associations regarding funding.
- 4.** **Request** annual Water Quality Reports from lake associations.



Appendix A

CASCO WATER BODIES & WATERSHEDS

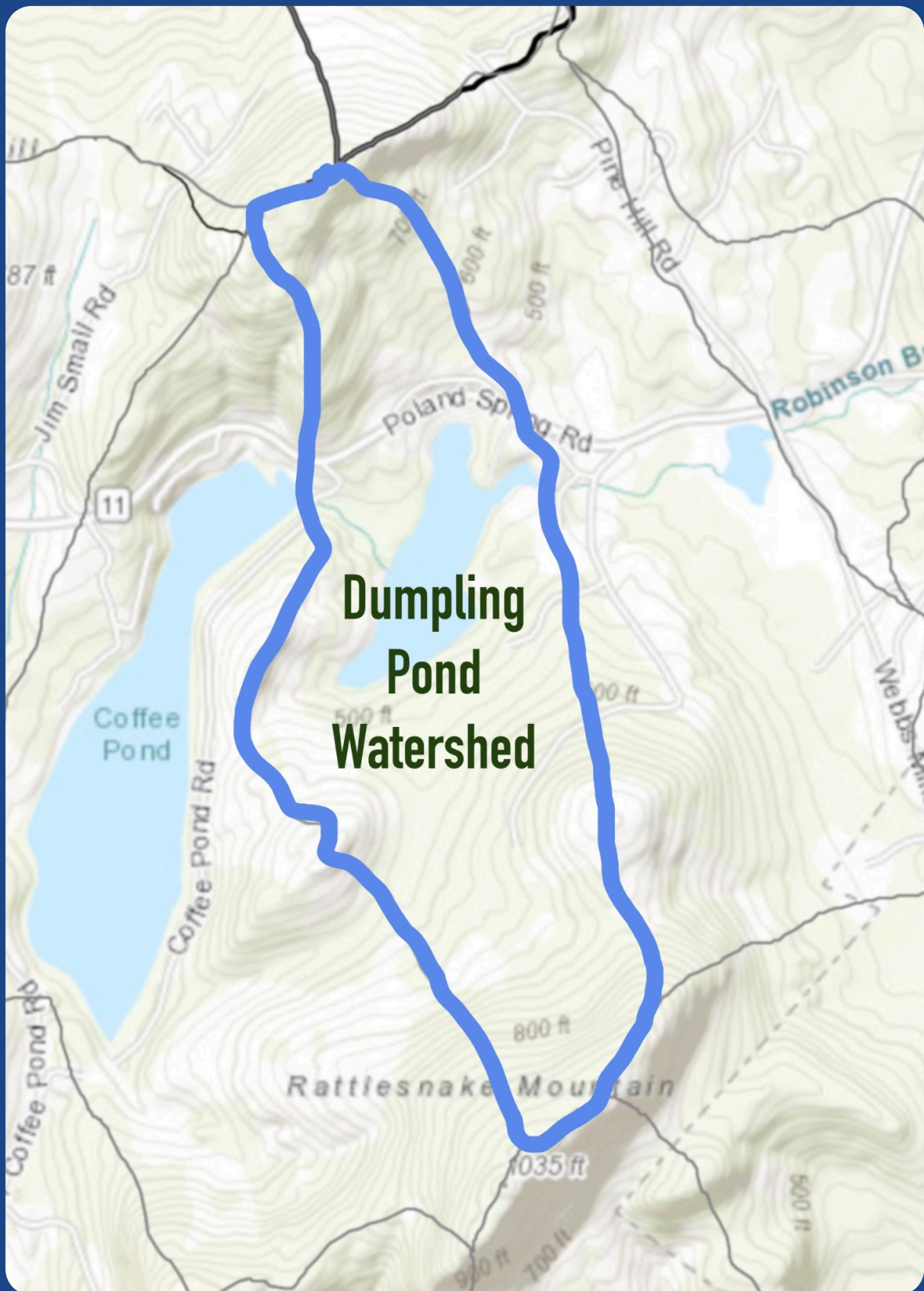
1. COFFEE POND & WATERSHED



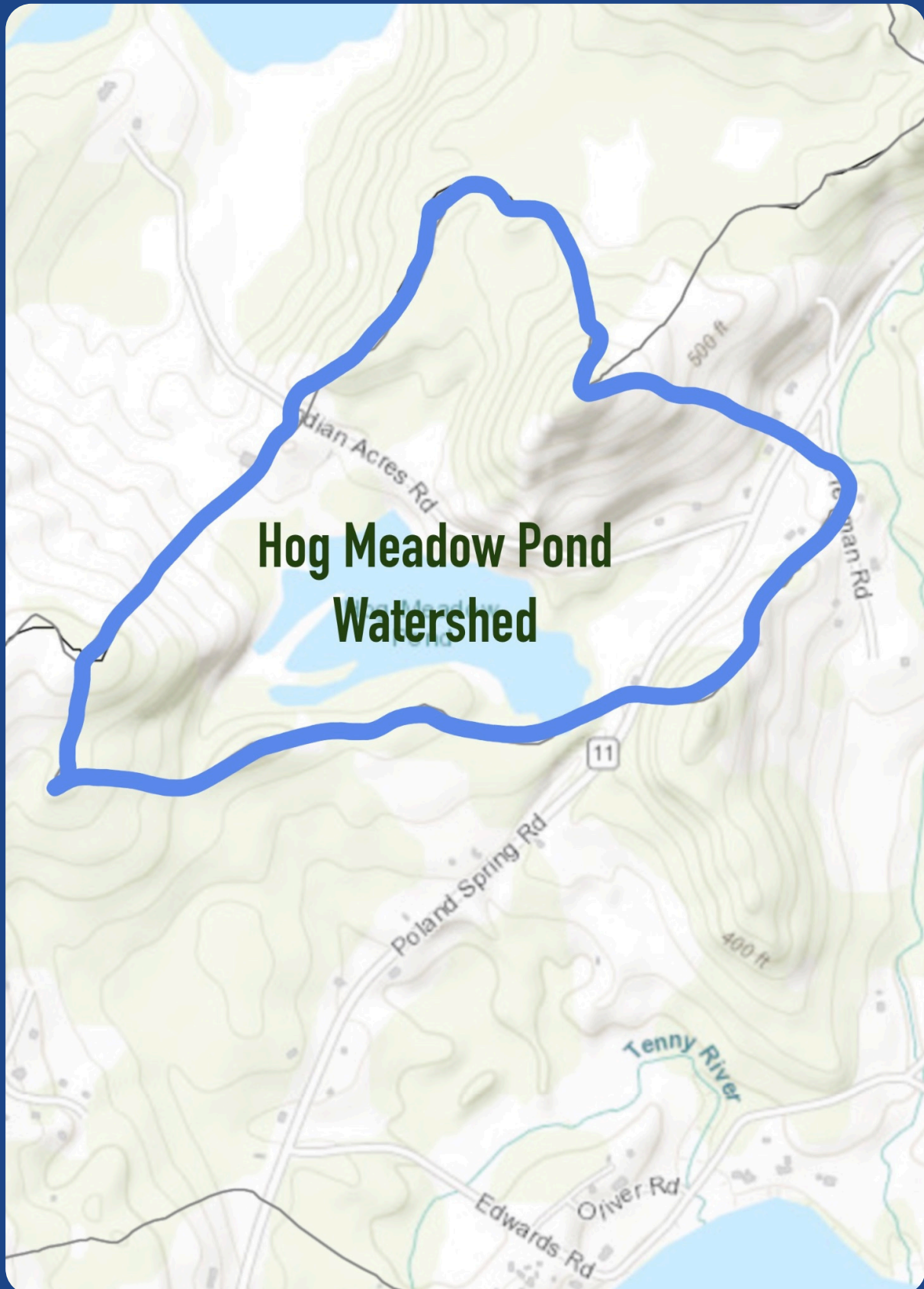
2. CRESCENT LAKE & WATERSHED



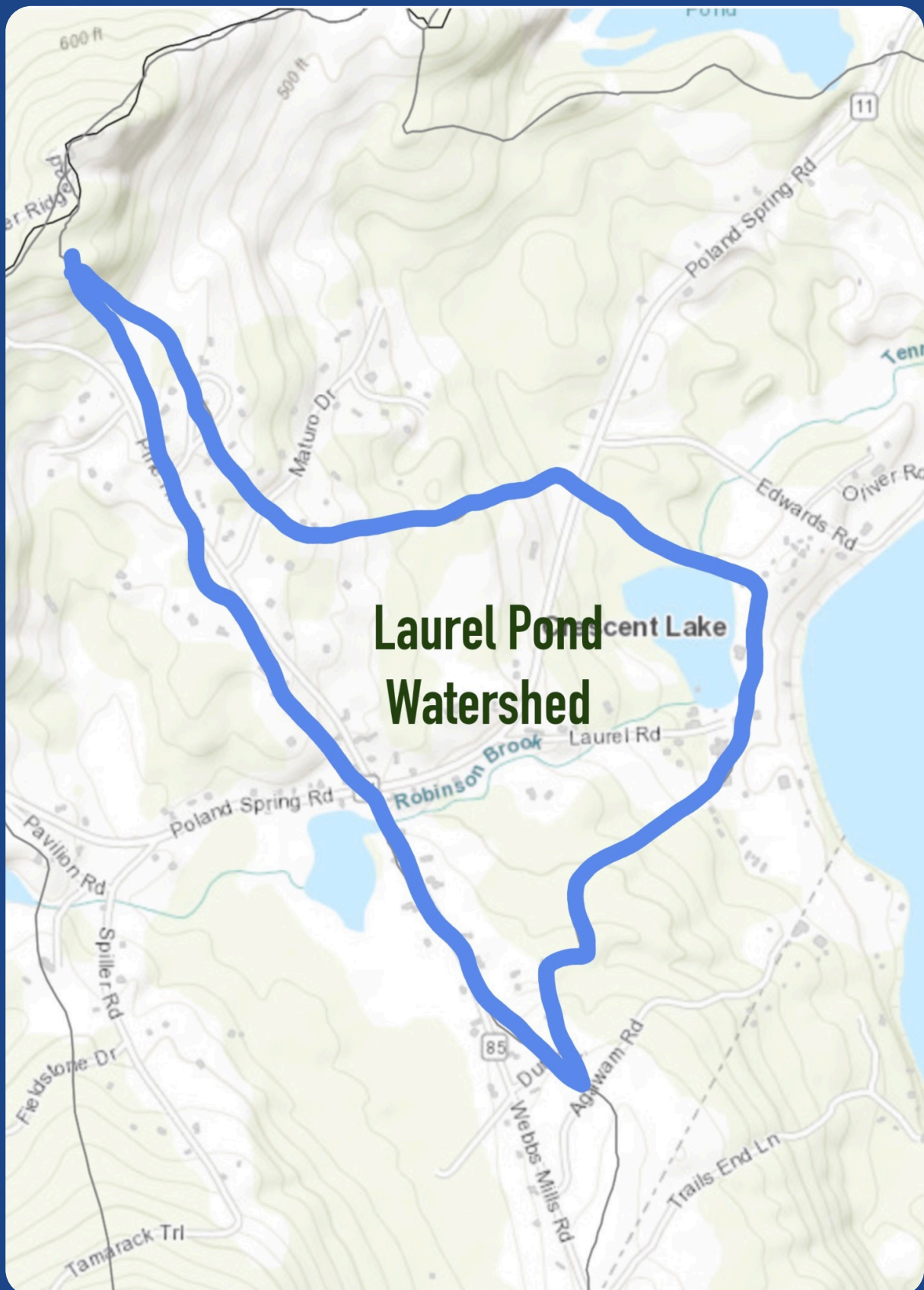
3. DUMPLING POND & WATERSHED



4. HOG MEADOW POND & WATERSHED



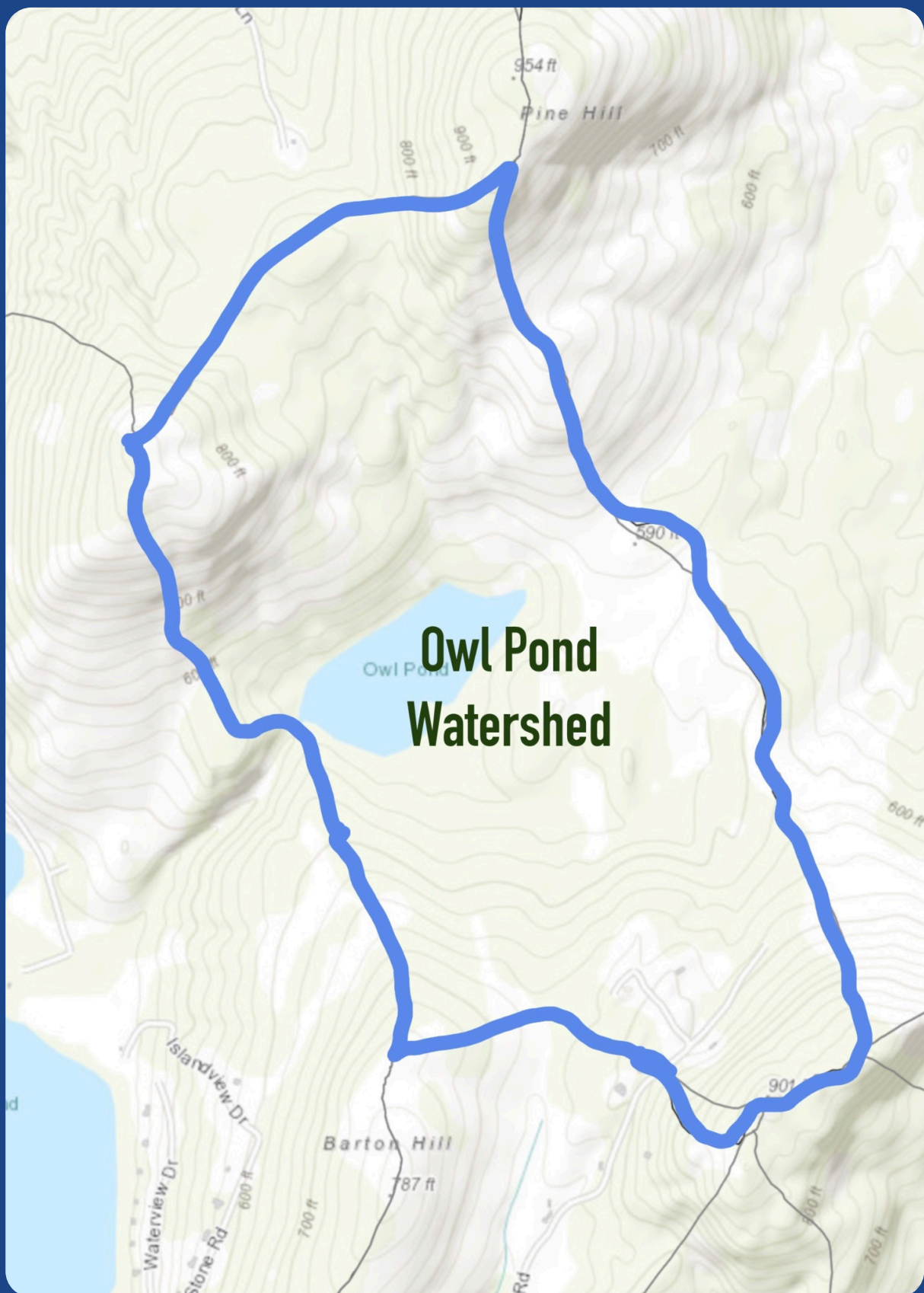
5. LAUREL POND & WATERSHED



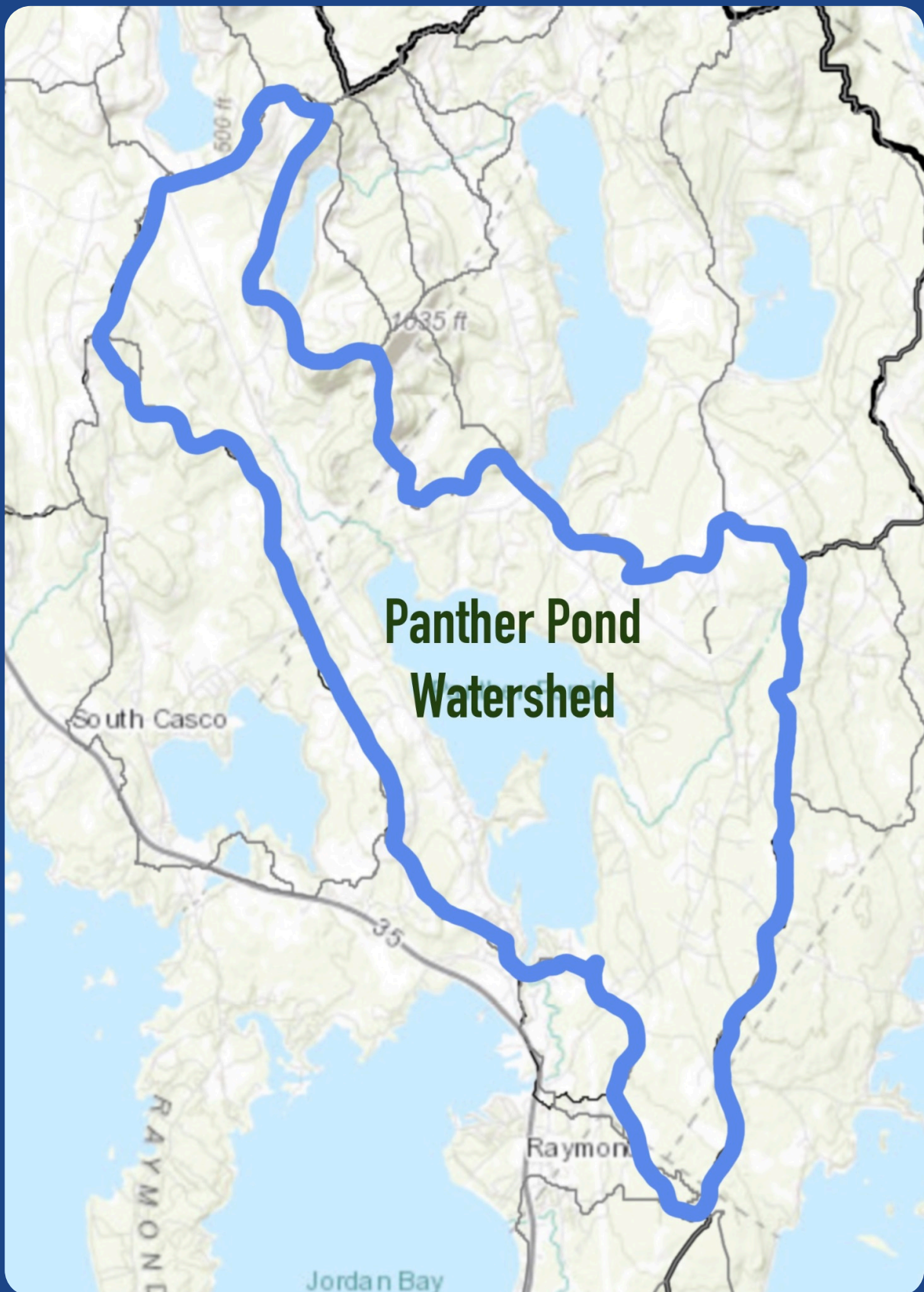
6. MILL POND & WATERSHED



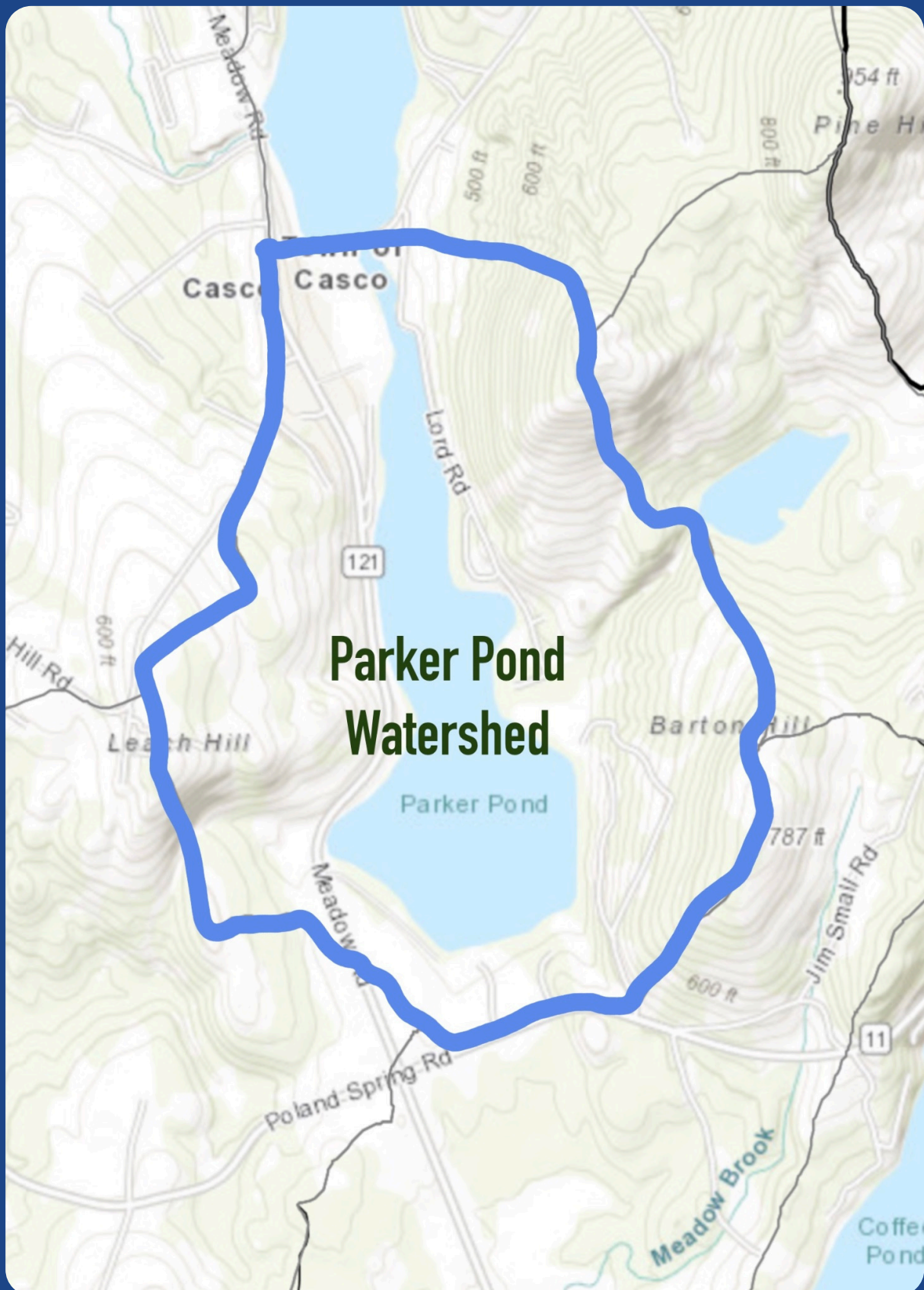
7. OWL POND & WATERSHED



8. PANTHER POND & WATERSHED



9. PARKER POND & WATERSHED



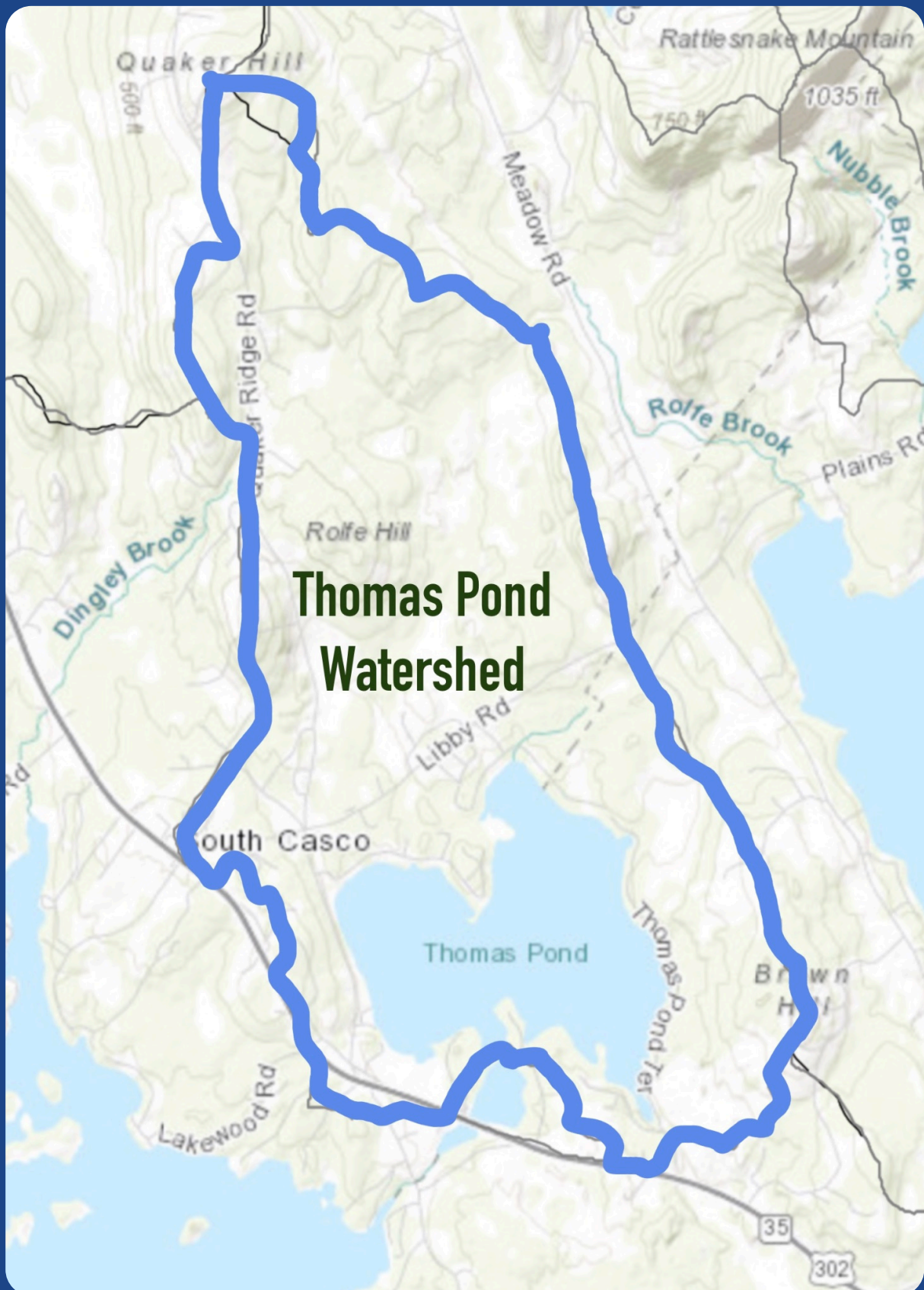
10. PLEASANT LAKE & WATERSHED



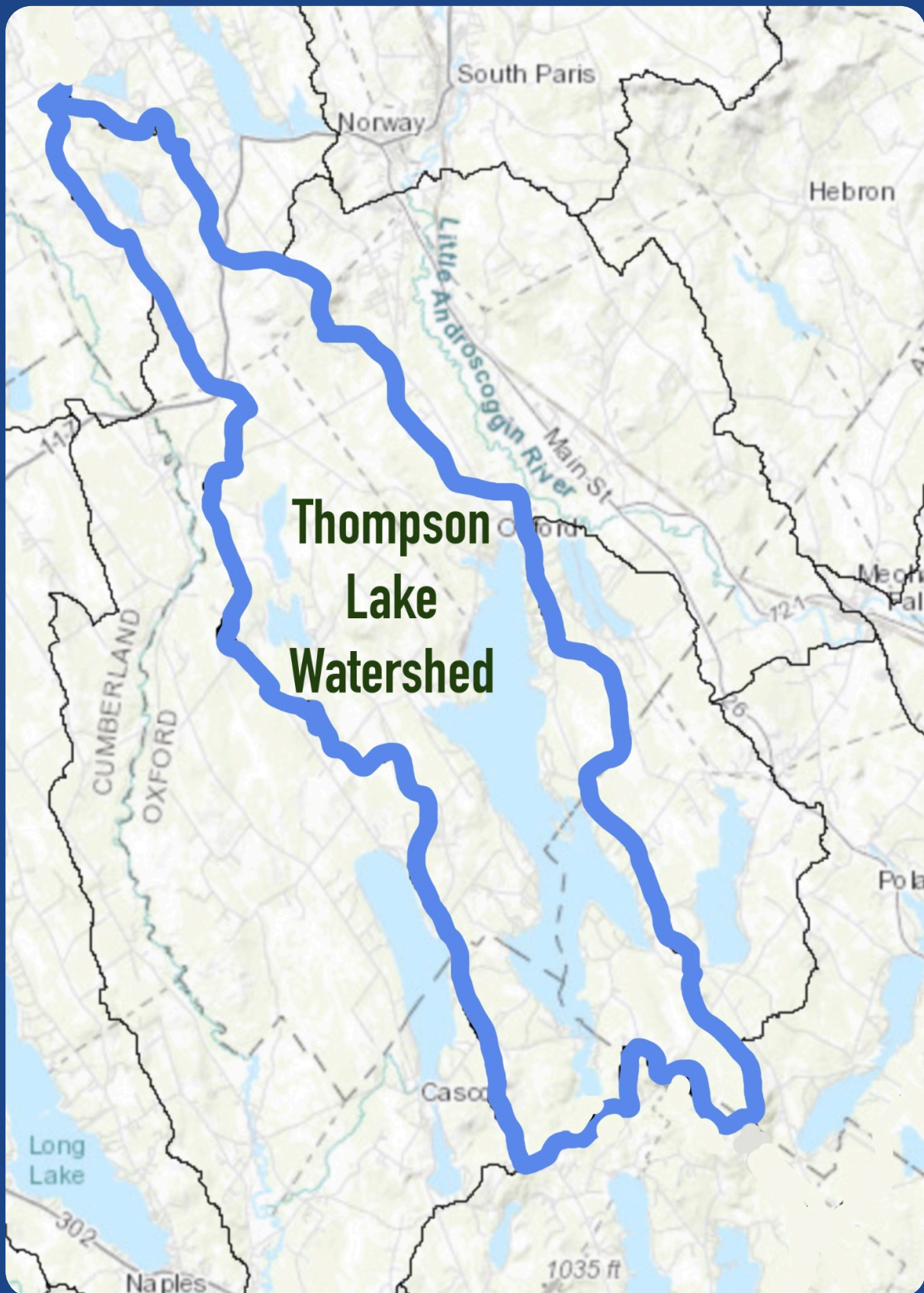
11. SEBAGO LAKE & WATERSHED



12. THOMAS POND & WATERSHED



13. THOMPSON LAKE & WATERSHED





Appendix B

WATER QUALITY TESTS

Dissolved Oxygen and Water Temperature

- **Recommended Device:** Pro-Solo Monitor
- **Frequency:** Conducted every two weeks from May-Sept
- **Form:** Revised form DEP-142a (rev 3/25). Mailed promptly to LSM (and online but not required).

Turbidity and Water Clarity

- **Device:** Secchi Disk
- **Frequency:** Conducted every two weeks from May-Sept
- **Form:** DEP-142a (rev 3/25). Mailed promptly to LSM.

Phosphorus

- **Device:** Surface and core tests in an approved lab-provided testing container
- **Frequency:** Annually between August 1 and September 15.
- **Form:** DEP-142a. Mailed promptly to LSM.

Chlorophyll

- **Device:** Integrated tube sampler or Niskin bottles
- **Frequency:** Annually, between August 1 and September 15
- **Form:** DEP 142a or the latest version

The background of the page is a photograph of tall, thin grasses with golden-brown seed heads in the foreground, swaying against a backdrop of a blue body of water with white-capped waves under a clear sky.

Appendix C

FUNDING SOURCES

Local Foundations & Trusts

Maine is home to many grant foundations and trusts **that support environmental initiatives.**

The following **local foundations and trusts** have a history of supporting water quality projects in Maine:

- 1.** The Davis Conservation Fund
- 2.** Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation
- 3.** Carol and David Hancock Charitable Trust
- 4.** John Sage Foundation
- 5.** Margaret E. Burnham Charitable Trust
- 6.** Morton Kelly Charitable Trust
- 7.** New England Grassroots Environmental Fund

State & Federal Grant Programs

Several grant programs support **erosion control, water quality monitoring, and stormwater management** in Maine.

- 1.** **The Maine Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) 319 Nonpoint Source Grants** are a primary funding source for projects that reduce runoff pollution through erosion control and stormwater retrofits, particularly in watersheds with an approved management plan.
- 2.** For lake watersheds, **the DEP Stormwater Compensation Fund** provides support for stormwater infrastructure projects designed to offset the impacts of development.
- 3.** **The Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program (MNRCP)** offers funding for streambank stabilization and wetland restoration projects that help reduce sedimentation.
- 4.** Watershed conservation efforts may be funded through partnerships with local **Soil & Water Conservation Districts**.
- 5.** Additionally, **USDA Rural Development** grants and loans can assist small towns with stormwater infrastructure projects connected to public health and environmental protection.



Appendix D

STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders

The establishment, development, and execution of the Casco Water Quality Commission will require coordination and support of the stakeholders to our water quality.

The following are the stakeholders the committee has identified:

- Casco residents
- Casco property owners
- Local businesses
- Lake associations
- Road associations
- Casco Selectboard
- Casco Planning Board
- Casco Code Enforcement staff
- Casco Open Space Commission
- Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Maine Department of Environmental Protection