

Waterbody: Lake Raconda

Town of: Wilmington

Lake Association: Lake Raconda Association

Project Type: Greeter Program

Contact Name and Email Address: Cory Ross, ross.wcnrcd@gmail.com

ANC Grant Award Amount: \$5657

Total Project Cost: \$19,188.23 *(includes in-kind match)*

Additional Funding Provided by: The Lake Raconda Environmental Foundation and the Town of Wilmington

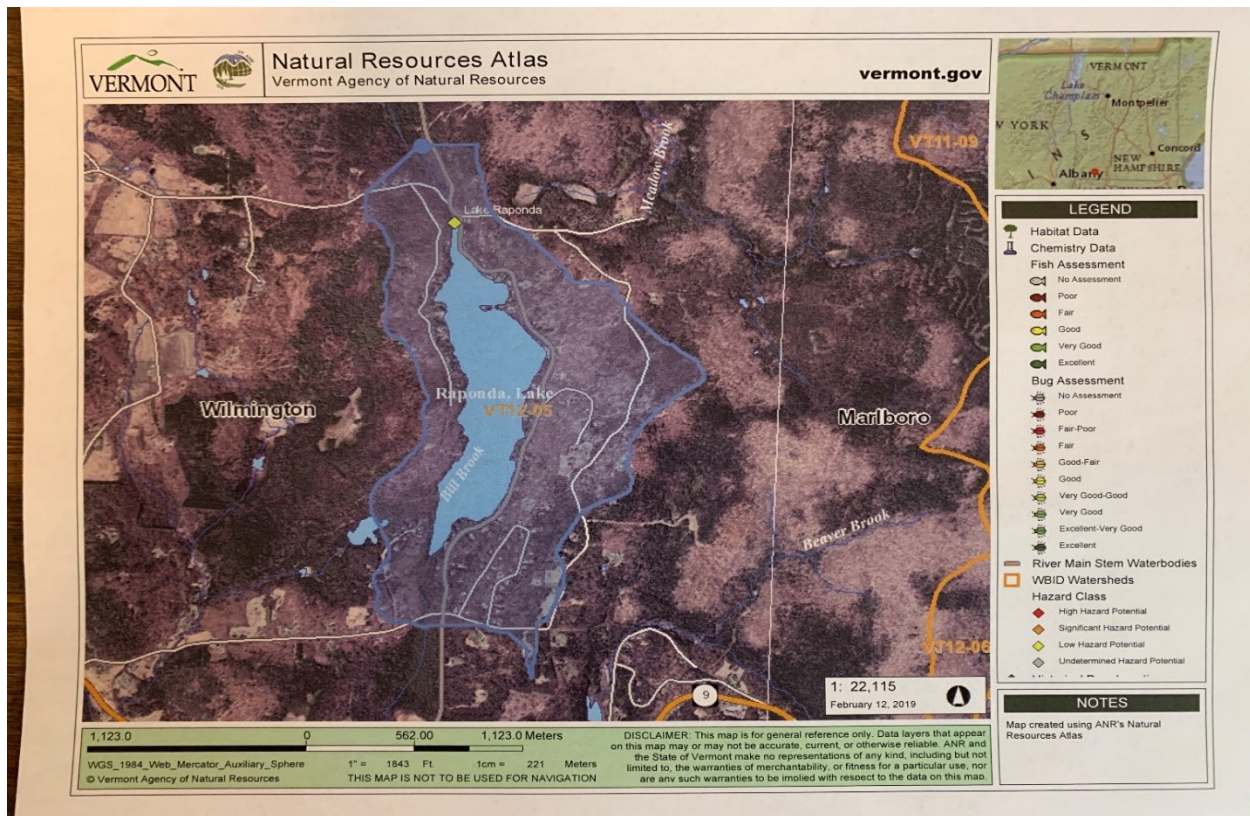
Lake Raconda Greeter Program

2023 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.

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, the Lake Raconda Environmental Fund and the Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District to implement a greeter program for the 2023 season. This is the seventh year that the program has operated, and the fourth 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.



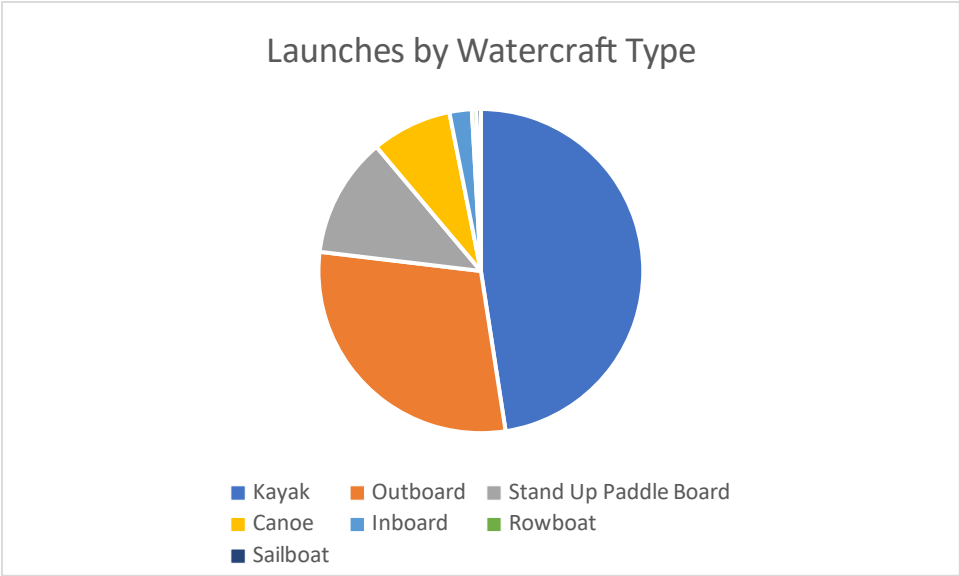
The 2023 Lake Raponda Greeter Season was staffed with paid greeters from May 25 until September 10th. Paid greeters were present all days except Tuesdays and Wednesdays throughout the season and Mondays and Thursdays during quieter portions of the season. The program utilized three paid greeters for the 2023 season, including one greeter who split hours between Raponda and South Pond. This allowed for greater scheduling flexibility. Members of the LRA also contributed at least 57 hours of volunteer greetering throughout the 2023 season.

Paid and volunteer greeters processed 225 watercraft launches over the course of 507.5 hours in the 2023 season and inspected 98 watercraft. Happily, no aquatic invasive species were detected at Lake Raponda in 2023. 98.9% of boaters indicated they would check for AIS on future boating trips themselves, which is the ultimate goal of the program.

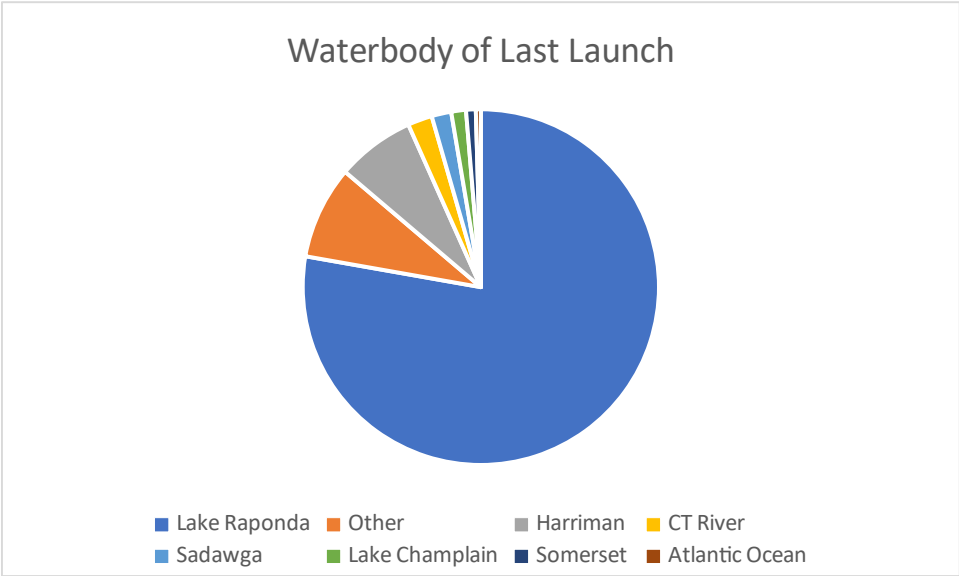
Program Challenges

The primary challenge the Lake Raponda program encountered for the 2023 season was a significant shortage of volunteers. This resulted in increased costs for the program as paid greeters were utilized for most of the season. Retaining qualified greeters in the current labor market required us to continue paying greeters \$20 per hour. While we feel this is a fair rate of pay, it does present financial challenges for the program. The considerable generosity of the Lake Raponda Environmental Foundation was critical to our ability to keep the program running smoothly all season.

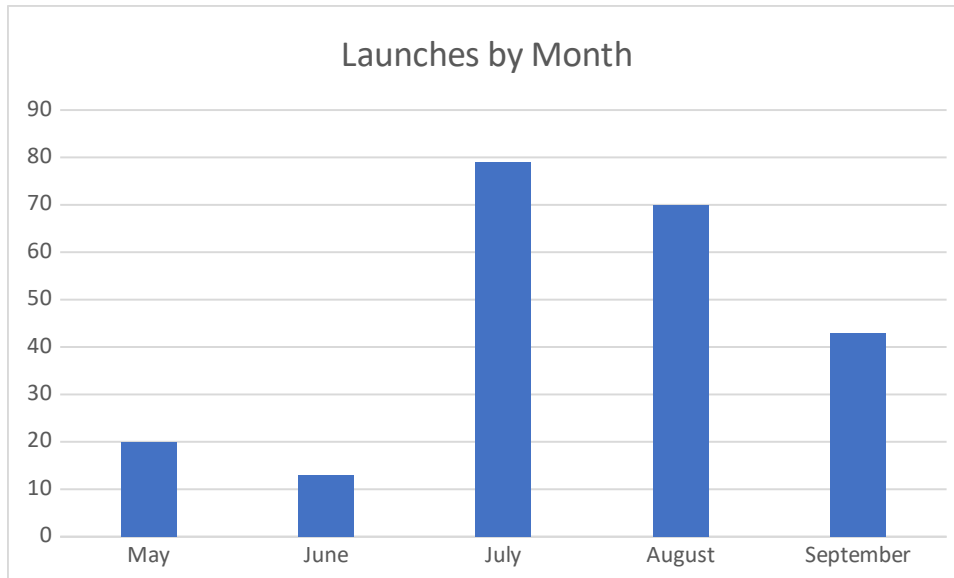
Lake Raponda 2023 Launch by Watercraft Type



Lake Raponda Waterbody of Last Launch



Boaters by Month



Month Number of Inspections

May	20
June	13
July	79
August	70
September	43

Funding	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Aquatic Nuisance Control Grant-in-aid Grant	\$5,657	\$5,975	\$5,230	\$5,508.50	\$5,876.00
Lake Raponda Foundation/LREF	\$8321.42	\$6,245.70	\$3,815	\$1912.48	\$1,763.05
1% Local Option Tax Fund (Wilmington)	\$4,102.81	\$3,023.76	\$1,900	\$500	\$1,763.05
Total Funds	\$18,081.23	\$15,244.46	\$10,945	\$7,920.98	\$9,402.10

Major Successes

1. Thanks to the financial support of the Lake Raponda Environmental Foundation and volunteer support of the Lake Raponda Association, we were able to provide coverage throughout the season on most days, despite needing to increase the paid greeter rate to \$20/hour. This is a testament to the local community and their commitment to protecting the watershed. Increased financial support from the Town of Wilmington was crucial to the continued success of the program as well.
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.



Greeters Alex Hernandez and David Warburton at the Lake Raponda boat launch in 2023.