

Contact: LHF Office, 973-663-2500  
LHF President Jessica K. Murphy, jess@lakehopatcongfoundation.org  
LHF Board Chairman Marty Kane, 973-271-8659

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Lake Hopatcong Petition Tops 1,000 signatures**  
*Lake Hopatcong Foundation urges legislators  
to “Make 2016 the year of Lake Hopatcong”*

LAKE HOPATCONG, N.J. (January 19, 2016)—More than 1,000 people have already put their name to a petition that urges legislators in Trenton to properly fund the management of Lake Hopatcong.

“Lake Hopatcong is the state’s largest lake, with 45 miles of shoreline and 2,500 acres of fresh water, enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors that live within its watershed and beyond,” the petition, which is posted on Change.org, says. “The fact that this state lake has received less and less financial support from Trenton each year is not only frustrating to those who use the lake for recreation and enjoyment, but is also devastating for the long-term health of the ecosystem. The depletion of resources for the state weed harvesting operation has caused parts of the lake to be unnavigable, and monitoring data has shown that the reduced weed harvests of recent years have reversed the long-term trend of improved water quality on the lake. With each passing year that the state does not properly support this state resource, it deteriorates in a way that hurts businesses, residents, visitors, and aquatic life. It is the responsibility of the State of New Jersey to properly manage this public natural and recreational resource.”

Within a week of the petition going live on January 1, it had registered more than 1,000 signatures of local residents and others who have a connection to New Jersey’s largest lake, and the signatures continue to pile up.

“One of the biggest messages that have come from our discussions with local and state leaders and residents has been the importance of talking with one voice as a community,” Lake Hopatcong Foundation president Jessica K. Murphy said. “And there seems to be a consensus that the state has not lived up to its obligations to this public lake, with reduced funding from year to year. Lake Hopatcong is an incredible asset, but it needs to be properly managed by the state. We hope to not only send that message to legislators in Trenton, but also to give our local legislators, who have fought for the lake many times in the past, the support they need to make the case to properly fund the lake in the upcoming budget process.”

The letters that are sent from each signer to 14 legislative contacts in Trenton implore the state assembly and senate to allocate \$500,000 in the state budget to the management of the lake, which is the amount determined necessary during the Save the Lake 2000 campaign that established the Lake Hopatcong Commission. The commission was tasked with the weed harvest and storm water management, among other things, but its funding deteriorated and it is

currently unfunded by the state and has no appointed chairman, though it still meets monthly. The weed harvest was taken over by the State Park Service and has become a bare-bones operation run by the state for \$155,000 a year, a fraction of what was determined necessary to properly remove the phosphorus and weed biomass from the lake. The scientist who has conducted the water monitoring of the lake since the 1980s remarked at a Lake Hopatcong Commission meeting that he could not recall the lake ever being so choked with weeds as it was in 2015, and that the water quality progress of years past is being undermined by the lack of state harvesting.

To get into the Fiscal Year 2017 New Jersey budget, the Lake Hopatcong Foundation is urging legislators to “make 2016 the year of Lake Hopatcong” during this spring’s budget process.

“It just cannot go forward with this level of financial support,” said Murphy. “Perhaps this petition will help get Lake Hopatcong on the radar screen for many down in Trenton. We can’t just sit back and let the lake and its residents and visitors suffer without trying something.”

To sign the petition, visit <http://tinyurl.com/lakehopatcong2016>, which will redirect to the Change.org website petition, titled “Support Lake Hopatcong in New Jersey's 2016 (FY2017) Budget.”

The Lake Hopatcong Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 2012 with a mission of “improving Lake Hopatcong for all, now and in the years to come.” To learn more, visit [www.lakehopatcongfoundation.org](http://www.lakehopatcongfoundation.org).

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