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**Lake Hopatcong Foundation celebrates Earth Day with focus on lake water quality
(Volunteers Sought!)**

LAKE HOPATCONG, N.J. – As Earth Day approaches on Monday, the Lake Hopatcong Foundation has multiple initiatives moving forward that are intended to protect, maintain, and improve the lake's waters.

The Water Scouts—an effort that was started by the Knee Deep Club in 2009 to seek out the invasive water chestnut species—will continue to seek out any incidence of water chestnut through an expanded program under the Lake Hopatcong Foundation. Volunteers will get refresher training on what to look for during the water chestnut search, and also learn more about other aquatic plant species, both native and invasive, as well as ways to test water clarity. The goal is to have a team of volunteers who are armed with extensive environmental knowledge, who can conduct the water chestnut search in June and continue to monitor the health of the lake during the summer season. Any residents who are interested in being a part of this team should contact Donna Macalle-Holly at donna@lakehopatcongfoundation.org or call the foundation office at 973-663-2500.

In addition, the foundation has launched a “This Is Your Lake” campaign that focuses on keeping the lake clean. Those who go to ThisIsYourLake.org can get a live view of the main lake from the foundation's office on Nolan's Point as well as learn about any lake clean-up events that might be scheduled by the foundation, the surrounding towns, or other groups. Efforts to provide Dumpsters for residents who need to dispose of debris pulled from the lake will also appear on that website.

Looking ahead, the foundation plans a new 2013 initiative that will address natural riparian vegetation, which can help keep pollutants from entering the lake. Those who attend the foundation's general membership meeting at 7 p.m. on May 17 at the Hopatcong Senior Center will learn more about these early efforts.

The foundation also plans a guided trail walk at Jefferson Township's new Prospect Point trail, which the Lake Hopatcong Foundation helped to fund, at 2 p.m. on Sunday, June 9.

“The purpose of the Lake Hopatcong Foundation is far-reaching, and includes everything from public safety to community cohesiveness,” said foundation president Jessica Murphy. “But at the core of everything is the health of the lake itself. If we fail to keep the waters clean and healthy, then the rest of

our efforts won't mean much. So maintaining the lake environment is paramount among our objectives, and although it is a year-round effort, Earth Day is a good time to focus on that part of our mission."

The Lake Hopatcong Foundation is an IRS registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that was established in 2012 with a focus on "improving Lake Hopatcong for all, now and in the years to come." Its offices are located at 37 Nolan's Point Park Road, Lake Hopatcong, NJ 07849. Call 973-663-2500 or visit www.lakehopatcongfoundation.org for more information.

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