

COLD STREAM POND (or LAKE?)

information from Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program

There has been an on-going discussion (argument?) about whether Cold Stream Pond is really a pond or a lake. Large area vs. small area, inlets vs. outlets, clarity vs. cloudiness ... these characteristics have all been mentioned as points in the argument. Finally, we may have an answer to the question in the definition of lakes and ponds included in the VLMP newsletter.

Lake: A depression or basin in the landscape that allows water to collect, or pool, from precipitation, runoff and groundwater.

Pond: A shallow lake. Ponds are shallow enough to permit sunlight to penetrate to the bottom over the entire body of water, allowing plants to grow throughout the lake.

Depth, as opposed to surface area, is a distinguishing characteristic between lakes and ponds. Many ponds have a surface area of several hundred acres or more, and some lakes are relatively small.

Some of the confusion about what qualifies as a lake or pond is due to the fact that many Maine lakes have historically been referred to as ponds, and vice-versa. Common public use of the two terms has made them seem interchangeable. For example, Cold Stream Pond has a maximum depth of 104' and an average depth of 40'. Taylor Pond in Auburn has a maximum depth of 49' and an average depth of 17'. Based on the depth criterion, both are lakes, but neither is a pond. On the other hand, Saddleback Lake in the Rangeley area has a maximum depth of 13', so it meets the definition of a pond, as does Echo Lake in Presque Isle, which is only 9' deep with an average depth of 5'. It is safe to say that many more lakes are referred to as ponds than vice-versa.

Of course, the confusion may also have arisen from another definition unique to the State of Maine.

Great Pond: Inland waters with surface areas of 10 acres or more are public and the property of the State. These are known as Great Ponds, and the State holds them and the soil under them as public.

This wording of Great Ponds was so defined in the Colonel Ordinance of 1641, and in an amendment in 1647, when Maine was part of the Massachusetts Colony. After Maine became a state in 1820, the need was recognized to further include manmade lakes and ponds having a surface area of 30 acres or more.

Maine law does not distinguish between lakes and ponds. As a result, many more water bodies in Maine are referred to as ponds than lakes. According to the definition, there are 2, 787 Great Ponds in the state.

So, is it Cold Stream Pond or Lake?

