Winnecunnet Pond

Location: Northeast corner of Norton, on Bay Rd

Access: Division of Fisheries and wildlife has a boat ramp on Bay Rd at the outlet of the Pond on the Snake River.

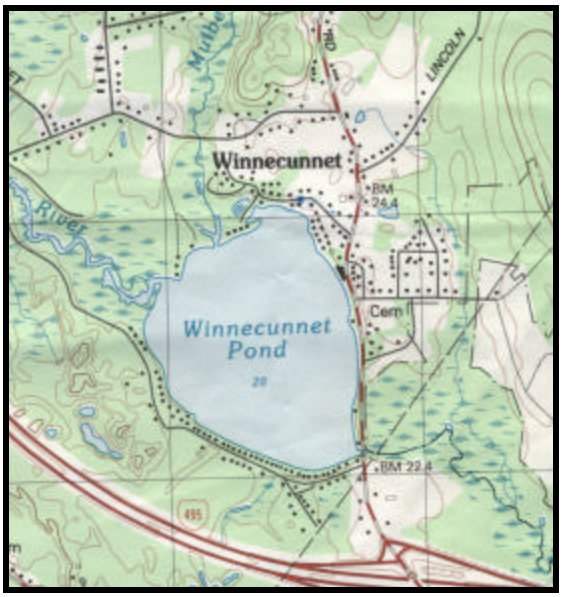
Size: 148 acres, 20,500 ± acre watershed

Depth: 2-12 feet

Source: Canoe River and Mulberry Meadow Brook, outlets as Snake River

Water Quality: Class B, Section 303(d) list: noxious plants

Owner: Norton Conservation Commission



Special designations: Canoe River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), Canoe River Sole Source Aquifer, Great Pond, Rare species habitat

Vegetation: Several plant communities are found within Winnecunnet Pond. The forested swamp consists mostly of red maples, black willows, poison ivy, greenbriar, fetterbush, silky dogwood, cinnamon fern and sensitive ferns. The shrub-scrub swamp consists of highbush blueberry, sweet pepperbush, speckled alder, elderberry , broadleaf cattail, tussock sedge, jewelweed, and marsh blue violet. Emergent marsh consists of swamp loosestrife, purple loosestrife, arrowwood, buttonbush, smartweeds, rice cutgrass, swamp rose, and arrow arum. Aquatic vegetation consists of watershield, green algae, water-starwort, waterweed, bayonet rush, duckweed, yellow water lily, white water lily, pickerelweed, ribbonleaf pondweed, fern pondweed, mermaidweed, bladderwort and water celery.

Fish: Tessilated darter, yellow perch, small mouth bass, green sunfish, bluegill, and bridle shiner

Birds: Chipping sparrow, goldfinch, redwing blackbird, yellow warbler, black-capped chickadee, Canada goose, song sparrow, catbird, mourning dove, tufted titmouse, northern flicker, blue jay, cardinal, tree swallow, mallard duck, wood duck, mute swans, belted kingfisher, double crested cormorant, green heron, great blue heron, and bald eagle.

Amphibians/reptiles: American toad, two-lined salamander, painted turtle, snapping turtle, musk turtle, bullfrog, green frog

Dragonflies/damselflies/butterflies: Slaty skimmer, blue dasher, meadowhawks, eastern amberwing, eastern pondhawk, widow skimmer, variable dancer, skimming bluet, orange bluet, spreadwings, ebony jewelwing, fragile forktail, 12-spotted skimmer, elegant spreadwing, green darner

Other wildlife: Skunk, muskrat, otter, freshwater mussels Elliptio complanata, Pyganadon cataracta, Lampsilis radiata, Ligumia nasuta, Leptodea ochracea, Margaritifera margaritifera

Winnecunnet Pond

History: Winnecunnet Pond is the only natural pond of greater than 10 acres in Norton, known as a Great Pond. It is suggested that the native name means "beautiful place in the pines" or "land of the black geese" but neither has been confirmed. A diagnostic study commissioned by the Norton Conservation Commission in 1988 recommended installing town sewer around the lake to control sources of nutrients and short-term in-lake weed management to address the excessive density of weeds. The Town purchased an aquatic weed harvester in 1990, to be used where appropriate in Norton's lakes and ponds. Trained volunteers have selectively harvested aquatic vegetation from Lake Winnecunnet during the summer months since then.

The Lake Winnecunnet Association brought to the attention of the Conservation Commission that the weed harvester is not effective on the fanwort that is currently infesting the pond. As a result the Conservation Commission posted a Request for Qualifications to hire a consultant to prepare a Diagnostic/Feasibility Plan for the lake. The consultant will conduct a biological survey of the lake and investigate the options for controlling the exotic, invasive plants. The master plan would also include maintenance of the lake once the invasive plants are removed and a management plan for recreational activities on the lake. This was completed in 2006 by Environmental Sciences Services (ESS). Funding for the final design and permitting for an invasive plant management plan was requested at the Fall Town Meeting of 2007. However, due to the economic climate, the town did not have the funds to pursue the project any further and the article was voted down.

Invasive species, pollution, water quality: Fanwort (Cabomba caroliniana), Variable water milfoil (Myriophyllum heterophyllum) and purple loosestrife (Lythrum salicaria) are the main exotic invasive plant species covering the pond. A densely populated shoreline has led to alteration of wetland vegetation along the pond edges and floodplain areas as well as water quality from failing septic systems. The majority of the shoreline homes have connected to municipal sewer systems in attempts to reduce nitrogen input to the pond. Five point source discharges release storm water into the pond from King Philip Rd, Bay Rd and Charlotte Ave.

In-lake and storm drain water quality testing in 2006 by ESS Group Inc. showed extremely high levels of phosphorus and elevated nitrogen, likely influencing the rapid growth of invasive plants within the pond. Phosphorus and nitrogen are present in lawn fertilizers. Chemical treatment of the invasive plants is recommended but funding was not approved at Town Meeting for the project. Reduction of sediments and pre-treatment of storm water is recommended for the five point source discharges.

Upstream control of goose/swan populations and Scooping the Poop Campaigns for pet waste as well as utilization of best management practices for agricultural activities is recommended for fecal coliform bacteria control.

Events, special announcements: Ice fishing is very popular on the pond. Canoeing, fishing, boating and sailing are popular summertime activities although the excessive plant growth makes it difficult anytime after July. The Lake Winnecunnet Association has regular meetings.

Some of the information and maps were taken from the Diagnostic and Feasibility Study, Lake Winnecunnet, Norton Massachusetts, ESS Group, Inc. December 7, 2006.