



Above left, Dr. Kathleen Weathers explains lake buoys; above right, LSPA Executive Director Elizabeth Harper answers questions.



Above, attendees learn about Lake Sunapee data that has been shared globally. Photos by Nina Tasi

## We Are Buoyed! The Story of Lake Sunapee's Global Fame, as told at August's Community Spotlight Event

August 20, 2024

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Many in New London and surrounding communities may know that the [Lake Sunapee Protective Association \(LSPA\)](#) deployed a new buoy structure and some new sensor equipment in May 2024, but fewer may know the story behind this effort and achievement.

This story, told in an interesting and informative presentation – We are Buoyed! The Story of Lake Sunapee's Global Fame – by Dr. Kathleen Weathers, distinguished senior scientist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies and (Volunteer) Research Director for the LSPA, at an AIL Community Spotlight event on August 20th, is one of serendipitous events, community passion, openness to new ideas, and the underlying belief that “you can't make the world better without knowing how it works.”

In the early 2000s, LSPA regularly collected data on Lake Sunapee, but analysis efforts were limited to comparing local data year to year. In 2004, shortly before Weathers' arrival in the area for a 2004-05 sabbatical with LSPA, a cyanobacteria bloom was discovered by community members. This catalyzed a movement to gather the resources to further research efforts. LSPA applied for a grant, ran workshops, established the LSPA scientific advisory committee, and, recognizing the improvements in sensor technology, came up with the idea of a lake buoy. Working with a Dartmouth Engineering team, LSPA developed and deployed its first buoy in 2007. This achievement and the sharing of collected data has resulted in tens of thousands of students from around the globe viewing Lake Sunapee data over the years.

At about the same time, LSPA joined the Global Lake Ecological Observatory Network (GLEON), whose mission is to conduct innovative science by sharing and interpreting high-resolution sensor data to understand, predict, and communicate the role and response of lakes in a changing global environment. GLEON is basically an international grassroots network of people – scientists, educators, policymakers, and citizens – focused on lakes. Since 2005, GLEON has held 22 meetings around the world, including one hosted by LSPA in 2011 with 111 participants from across six continents.

Towards the end of the presentation, LSPA Executive Director Elizabeth Harper joined Weathers in answering questions from the group and encouraging community engagement. Both are buoyed by international efforts to collect, share, and analyze lake data and the promise these efforts hold to understand, address, and perhaps forecast issues affecting lake health.

To learn more, [Lake Sunapee's buoy data can be found here](#).

Community Spotlights events highlight community connections, AIL partnerships, and the experience of lifelong learning. If you have an idea or topic that you would like to share, [please click here](#).