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## What Do Taxes and Milfoil Have In Common

The answer can be found when you read the rest of this report. This fall all Limerick residents received a letter from the John E. O'Donnell & Associates informing them that they were selected to review the assessments for all homes in Limerick for a new tax basis. Included in the letter was the information on the specific property of each homeowner. It was sticker shock for all water-front home and lot owners who were told their land assessment alone go to approximately \$146,000. In most cases this represented a monumental increase which resulted in the average tax bill going up by 30 to 35 per cent.

The fledgling Lake Arrowhead Conservation Council looked at this and realized that we needed to make a stand and get involved. O'Donnell's letter offered the opportunity to sign up for a review so you could present reasons or arguments why their re-evaluation wasn't correct. The Council began to notify and organize the members of the Lake Arrowhead Lake Improvement Committee and provided information through internet links that would help taxpayers provide detailed information why milfoil has decreased their overall home or lot value. On the Saturday scheduled for

these review sessions, fifteen minutes per review, O'Donnell had five associates and himself on hand to deal with the flood of taxpayers that signed up to contest their re-evaluations.

LACC meanwhile tapped some resources from Maine's DEP, COLA and the Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program and came up with scientific studies performed by University of Vermont and University of Maine which detailed the impact of milfoil on residential property values. Armed with that data and various real estate transactions and current on the market prices, we had a sit down meeting with the President of O'Donnell and Associates. LACC was represented by board members Phil Oreto and Mike Fitzpatrick. Fortunately for us, our fifteen minutes turned into over an hour meeting. Ideas and facts were exchanged and no promises were made other than O'Donnell would reconvene his team of assessors and review the data we provided.

This is what we heard back from O'Donnell. "We made changes on individual properties based on our meetings with property owners. On Lake Arrowhead we reduced waterfront components of the land value by ten

percent on all waterfront properties to recognize milfoil. We also tried to identify the individual properties that have significant infestation problems and reduced these properties by an additional ten percent." In fact, **this translated to most waterfront owners receiving a \$300 to \$400 reduction in their annual tax bill.** This is a break that occurs every year now. It's not a one time thing.

While LACC's board thinks there still might be opportunities to go back for more reductions, O'Donnell stated "I read all of the literature you provided. I realize the 16% number in the New Hampshire study. Time will tell what the actual impact is on Lake Arrowhead but we are comfortable with the adjustments we decided."

The result of LACC's effort on behalf of Limerick's waterfront owners is a ten to twenty percent reduction on their assessed land value. We know more is possible and will continue to fight the milfoil battle both in the water and at town hall, as well as at the state level. But to do this, we need your support as dues paying members. Please consider the tax savings you might have received and consider joining LACC as we continue to be MILFOIL'ers!!!



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*"\$300 to \$400 reduction in their annual tax bill.."*  
- by Mike Fitzpatrick,  
President LACC