

Gregg Lake Bathymetry

Joan Gorga

Have you ever wondered what the bottom of Gregg Lake looks like and where it really is the deepest? My father always told me that the bottom dropped straight down 100 feet just off the ledges on the east side, but I was never quite sure I believed him, especially since I could see the bottom a good way out when snorkeling. Late last summer, I borrowed a GPS-enabled depth sounder from the New Hampshire Division of Environmental Services to try to gather data on the unseen contours of the bottom of Gregg Lake.

One morning when the lake looked pretty calm, I attached the sonar sensor to the bottom of my canoe and headed out to crisscross the lake, starting at the southern end and taking latitude, longitude and depth readings every 100 feet or so. I did get some strange looks while I was out there, and ended up explaining to several people what I was trying to accomplish, but all said they looked forward to seeing the results. I worked my way north through the middle of the lake, but eventually, the wind picked up and started blowing me back over spots I'd already mapped, so I had to call it quits for the day.

The next day, my cousin Suzy agreed to go out with me, and at the beginning it all went much better. We successfully crisscrossed to the northern end of the lake until we had

more than 400 data points in total, but we carefully saved the last 100 points we were allowed so we could go back over a few areas where there seemed to be underwater ridges or drop-offs that we hoped to better define. We laid out a plan to make the most of our last points and started to gather them, but the instrument began to slow down and then skip points. It got slower and slower until we had to accept that we weren't going to be able to squeeze any more data collection out of the apparently dying battery.

Fearful of losing all our data, I spent a few hours manually recording latitude, longitude and depth values for the 425 points we did collect. Since it was a beautiful afternoon, I settled in on our back deck to focus on the chore. Deeply lost in concentration, I suddenly sensed something nearby and looked up to see a black bear only a few feet away. I guess he wasn't expecting to see me there, either. As soon as I lifted my head, he scurried off.

I returned the ailing depth sounder to NHDES the next morning. In spite of my worries, they were able to extract the data and plot it, and announced that we had collected a nice data set. When we saw it plotted, Suzy and I had to agree, even if we did feel cheated out of 100 points.

So much for my father always telling me the lake dropped straight down 100 feet just off the ledges! The deepest spot we found is 35.7 feet down, and is located out in the middle of the lake toward the southern end. With contours drawn every five feet, one can easily see where the original pond must have been before several iterations of dams raised the lake level by more than ten feet. We could also see that the bottom dropped down fairly quickly not too far out from Suzy's beach. I inadvertently found that spot when I waded out for a late October swim after the boards had been removed from the dam and the lake level had gone down some sixteen inches. I had planned to go for a swim; I just hadn't planned to get in so quickly! ❁



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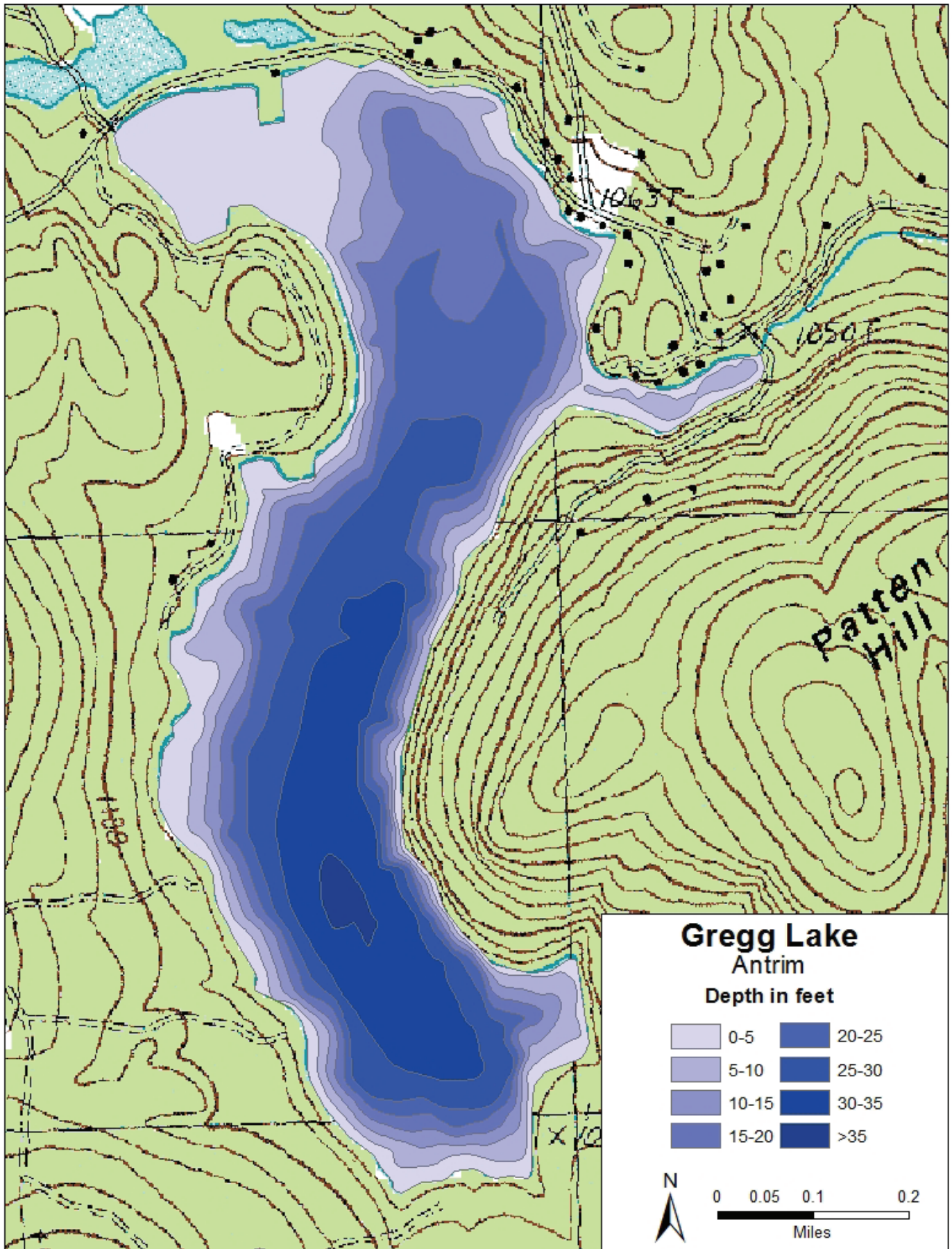
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Gregg Lake bathymetric data collected Summer 2017 by VLAP volunteers and mapped by NHDES.