



AGENDA OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Monday, March 13th, 2017

6:30 P.M.

Town Hall – Lower Level Meeting Room

Present: CP: Christopher Picone
LC: Linda Couture
AH: Andrew Henderson

Absent: Marshall Dennis

6:30 PM: Agenda Review/General Discussion

CP opened the meeting of the Ashburnham Conservation Commission under the MA Wetland Protection Act, M.G.L. Chapter 131, Section 40, and in accordance with the Ashburnham Wetlands Protection Bylaw and associated Rules and Regulations.

6:35 PM – Notice of Intent – Lake Watatic (Map 26, 55, 56, 57): The applicant, Watatic Lake Association, has filed an Ecological Restoration Limited Project for the removal of nuisance vegetation via chemical treatment, as well as an annual drawdown of the lake.

Dominic Meringolo (DM) of SOLitude Lake Management represented the applicant, along with Mark Dymek of Lake Watatic.

Herbicide applications will focus treatments of invasive Variable Leaf Milfoil, along with some dense, localized patches of native plant species. No treatments will involve native species in undeveloped areas of the shoreline or native species in areas where only invasive milfoil is treated. It was noted that Lake Watatic does not have as much treatment as some of the other large lakes in Ashburnham. Essentially, Lake Watatic is in “maintenance mode” with annual, targeted treatments, which helps to keep the herbicide dosages low each year.

The proposed annual drawdown is only a foot, limited by the dam's flashboards. During the drawdown period, the only other proposed activity referenced in the NOI is the manual cleanup of beaches.

M. Dymek noted that water quality seems to have improved over the last few years, perhaps due to improved septic systems.

CP asked if there could be any areas set aside as refuge (untreated) zones, as done on Billy Ward and Watatic Ponds. DM noted that, in effect, there were hardly ever treatments on the northeast shore. Milfoil and some lilies would be treated, but not by entering far into the coves on the north. In front of the Town-owned lots in the northwest portion of the lake, lilies are left untreated, but variable milfoil would be removed.

Glyphosate (Rodeo) is used for spot-treatment of dense stands of water lilies. The Commission discussed the aquatic herbicide glyphosate as being fairly harmless at recommended doses, but some surfactants used with glyphosate are far more toxic than the active ingredient itself. SOLitude does use non-ionic surfactants (e.g., Aqua-Pro), and they agreed to report which surfactants were used in each annual report.

This is the first NOI for Watatic Lake to include the use of copper-based algaecides. DM was not aware of any use of algaecides in his 20+ years of working with herbicide treatments at Watatic Lake. However, there have been recent "fishy odors" that could be linked with algae. They wanted to include copper-based algaecides in this NOI only as a contingency. If used, algaecide concentrations would not exceed 0.1 parts per million (ppm), while 1 ppm if allowed.

CP noted that legal concentrations of copper herbicides are still above a toxic limit for many aquatic organisms, but the copper is absorbed by the lake sediments within a few days.

Monitoring. Dissolved Oxygen (DO) and temperature are probably the important water quality indicators to measure. The negative impacts of copper algaecides are likely due to reduced oxygen, rather than direct impacts of copper itself.

Monitoring. As already being done on Lower Naukeag Lake, the Commission requested that simple maps be provided of pre- and post-treatment vegetation surveys. Such surveys are relatively quick (3 hours), with the resulting maps only showing the general patches of vegetation. The Commission also stated that **the general maps should show the target species (pre- and post-treatment), as well as non-target species.**

The Commission then discussed the importance of **education for the Lake Association.**

1. SOLitude has images of invasive species they can share with the Association for their newsletter. It would greatly help volunteer monitoring to find invasive infestations and treat them quickly.
2. SOLitude also has handouts to share on shoreline management, yard waste, etc. to reduce nutrient input to the lake.
3. The Association should remind people about the value of buffer strips between lawns and the lake. Strips of natural vegetation reduce stormwater runoff, take up nutrients, and constitute inhospitable habitat for geese. The Commission suggested an incentive to reduce Lake Association fees for homeowners that install or maintain these strips.

CP motioned to close the Hearing for the Watatic Lake Association.

LC seconded.
Approved 3-0.

CP motioned to approve the NOI and issue an Order of Conditions per plan and discussion.
LC seconded.
Approved 3-0.

Other Commission Business: None

Guest & Visitors: None

Next meeting March 27, 2017.

CP motioned to adjourn.
LC seconded.
Approved 3-0.

7:15 Adjourned.