

Meeting Notes

Highland Lake Fish Stocking and Boat Access

November 29, 2011 (3:00 PM)

Attendance: Nathan Poore, Ralph Johnson, Tom Bannon, Mike Fasulo, Faith Varney, Jim Thibodeau, Paul Caron, Francis Brautigam (MDIFW Regional Fisheries Biologist) and George Powell (Department of Conservation).

There was a general discussion about MDIFW position/policy regarding fish stocking and public boating access. Mr. Brautigam explained the policy and the purpose of the policy. He indicated that fish stocking would be suspended unless the town supports an enhanced boat access site that would accommodate larger boats. Mr. Brautigam stated that the purpose of the policy is to ensure and encourage equitable access to public water bodies in the State of Maine. This has been a long standing policy of the State and indicated there is no “grey” area in the interpretation of the policy. It is being applied to other locations in the State and needs to be treated no differently for Highland Lake.

There was a question from meeting participants regarding options to stock the lake with private or local money and maintain boating access status quo. Mr. Brautigam said that it would require a private license to stock the lake but the same policy applies regarding equitable boat access. He went on to state that a permit would be denied unless there were significant boating access improvements.

There was some discussion about what size boats would be accommodated in an expanded boat access site and how many boats could be accommodated at an expanded site. Mr. Brautigam stated that the MDWIF would be looking for a launch site that could accommodate up to 10 boats with a length between 16 and 18 feet. He said the objective is to accommodate anglers in open skiff style boats.

Mr. Brautigam said that the current site can not accommodate the desired objective. He also said that the design of an expanded site could “self restrict” larger boats by limiting the width of the launch, not providing dock space, and tighter turning radii.

All at the meeting indicated that better signage about the use of the site could be helpful, regardless of whether it will be expanded.

Similar to the concerns raised at the August 30 meeting, attendees noted that there were many issues to consider including the following: mil foil threat, shallow water launch site, most fish were caught through the ice, additional boat traffic will create safety concerns. Mr. Brautigam indicated that he appreciated the concerns but that there were either solutions or similar concerns for most water bodies but the policy is still in place – it is a balance of priorities.

The participants were asked to conduct a straw poll regarding their position on this matter (Town and State staff did not participate). Most meeting participants indicated that they represented the views of various lake side associations. They were asked if they could support an expanded boat launch and if they voted “no” they understand that cold water fish species stocking would not be an option in the

future. Five people voted “no” and one participant indicated that he could support a launch with a very narrow focus (designed to accommodate the smallest and fewest boats possible)/ He indicated that the public should have better access.

Nathan Poore informed the group that the Town Council will need to consider this matter and that he would recommend a public hearing prior to sending a recommendation to the MDIFW. Mr. Brautigam agreed to attend a public hearing with the Town Council.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted: Nathan A. Poore