

approved on Jan 13th  
Christine Ward

**Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force Meeting Minutes:**

**Monday December 9, 2013 8:30 AM**

**Location: Small conference room on the 2nd floor, off of the Town Manager's office, Town Hall 334 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA)**

PRESENT: C. Ward (chair), D. Abrams, J. Dezieck, R. Dlugosz, N. Evans, B. Nelson, D. Phillips, C. Rembold (ex officio), J. Sokul, Z. Chornyak (from Tighe and Bond Engineering)

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 1/13/14 at 8:30 AM, Town Hall

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: Approved as written.

LAKE MANSFIELD IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE ANNUAL SUMMARY: Approved with minor changes. The final document (**attached**) will be sent to Jennifer Tabakin, Town Manager, by C. Ward. The document includes discussion of :

- Water quality assessment and improvements,

- Protecting buffer zone and other sensitive habitats,

- Noted during discussion :

  - Phragmites control work has been initiated.

  - Wild parsnips are spreading; Conservation Commission to be requested to provide funds for control. Educational signage posted about dangers of handling/ingesting.

- Park, forest, beach and lake use and accessibility,

- Public safety,

- Future work.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS FOR LAKE MANSFIELD ROAD: Z. Chornyak, Tighe and Bond design engineer added a fourth option to the three previously discussed, (**attached**) a much less expensive alternative than #1 and more environmentally friendly in that it substituted plantable gabions for riprap for securing the lake bank. All four options have been sent to Conservation Commission. Z. Chornyak will check into cost of requisite permitting. *Note: no options have been chosen at this time, rather the work descriptions and cost estimates will inform future planning.*

PHASING OF IMPROVEMENTS: Initiated by R. Dlugosz (see attachment of Doc used), discussion led to consensus that it will be useful to have a phased approach to the multiple improvements contemplated for the lake, road, parking areas and beach, doing the improvement work in some particular area as funds become available provided that that would not mandate redoing when another part of the projected work is done. (E.g. While reconfiguring Lk. Mansfield Road partially one way would first require reconfiguring parking lot to permit turnarounds, shoreline stabilization and lake overflow reconstruction can both be addressed independently from either road or parking lot construction.)

DISCUSSION OF NEXT STEPS: Should be done with reference to Master Plan. Funds for permitting should be allocated and permitting pursued. Also, it would be useful to get baseline survey of road and compare it with past measurements to document extent of road erosion into lake. J. Sokul will check old records. We will need investigation of various funding resources including Community Preservation Act grant.

Nina Evans, recording secretary

## Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force: 2013 Report

Provided to: the Great Barrington Board of Selectman and to the Committees represented on the task force

### 2013 Task Force Members:

Christine Ward, chair (Citizen at Large), Ron Dlugosz, co-chair (Citizen at Large), Deborah Phillips (Select Board), Joseph Sokul (DPW Superintendent), Dale Abrams (Lake Mansfield Alliance) Nina Evans (Lake Mansfield Alliance alternate), Jessica Dezieck (Conservation Commission), Brandee Nelson (Planning Board), Kathy Plungis (Parks and Recreation Commission), Shep Evans (Conservation Agent, ex-officio) and Chris Rembold (Town Planner, ex officio).

In March 2006, the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force was created by the Board of Selectmen and charged with the development and implementation of a Lake Improvement Plan. In 2013 the Task Force continued its work in planning for and supporting the implementation of improvements in the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area with the goal of providing for public safety, use and accessibility, water quality improvements, protection of the watershed and stewardship of the resource area.

### I. **Water Quality Improvements and Assessments:**

- a. One of the major threats to the Lake's health was eliminated through the installation of a new Castle Hill Avenue storm drain system which captures and filters runoff from upper Castle Hill Avenue before it enters Lake Mansfield. This project was coordinated by the DPW and town planner and partially funded through a \$266,500 grant from Massachusetts DEP. The grant was matched with a 40% match of Town funds including volunteer and staff time. New filtration catch basins were installed and the road was resurfaced to support this improvement of this drainage system. This work will have a significant impact on the water quality at Lake Mansfield by eliminating the significant annual contribution of sediments to the lake. Water protection labels will be installed on the improved filtration drainage basins in partnership with the Housatonic Valley Association.
- b. The unpaved parking area at the beach continues to contribute sediments the lake in form of unfiltered run-off during storm events. Unmitigated storm water is also a concern along Lake Mansfield Road and where Knob Hill Road enters Lake Mansfield Road in the boat launch area.
- c. The summer season's water testing results, provided weekly by The Town's Health Agent, showed that Lake Mansfield waters were healthy for swimmers throughout the 2013 swimming season.
- d. A grant through the Massachusetts Environmental Trust is being sought in partnership with Bard College at Simon's Rock to fund a Lake Mansfield Water Quality Monitoring project which will study the water quality of Lake Mansfield over a three year period. Should the grant be received, this project will help the Town better understand the health of the lake and how it is impacted by nonpoint source runoff pollution and will engage students in the study of this key resource area.

### II. **Protecting the Buffer Zone and Sensitive Habitats – Application of the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act**

- a. The mowing policy developed for the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area aimed at supporting sensitive habitat area and encouraging plant growth that can help prevent erosion was followed in 2013
- b. A two year program to eradicate invasive phragmites has been provided through contract with JMP Environment Consulting. The treatment program, utilizing a carefully targeted herbicide applied by syringe to cut plant stalks, was approved and funded through the Conservation Commission. The initial work was done in the fall of 2013, a 2nd year of treatment will occur in 2014

- ### III. **Use and Accessibility** –Recreational use of the lake, beach area, forest trails and Lake Mansfield Road increased again in 2013. Although the greatest number of users is noted in the summer season, the Recreation Area is a popular destination throughout the year. The accessible trail system in the conservation forest is used by many community members and visitors in all season. A listing of the recreational opportunities is available at [www.Lakemansfield.org](http://www.Lakemansfield.org) .

- a. The strong summer programming provided through the Parks Commission is essential to our safe and well maintained waterfront. (insert details for 2013 summer programming report)
- b. Improvements funded by the Parks Commission and provided through the DPW include improvements to Speed Hump/ Cross walk, installation of a new porta-let enclosure and installation of a new swing set helping to insure that our beach area is well maintained, inviting and safe.
- c. Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA), a project of Great Barrington Land Conservancy, engaged volunteers in the care of the recreation area and provided \$1,700 in support of these efforts. LMA 2013 accomplishments include the sponsoring of volunteer days for community and student groups, regular trail maintenance, clearing of fallen trees due to storm damage, hand-pulling and cutting of invasive species, updating of kiosks, replacement of signage and community outreach and education. A Greenagers trail crew was hired by LMA for a day of summer trail maintenance. Efforts to encourage the educational use of the resource area included the mentorship of a college student intern who was engaged in forest stewardship and trail care from fall 2012 to spring 2013. In addition, LMA maintains an informative Lake Mansfield website, produces an annual Lake Mansfield newsletter and provides for recreational opportunities including guided hikes, summer yoga and winter snowshoeing.
- d. Approximately 400 square feet in the boat launch, privately held by person(s) unknown, will be taken by the town to support future drainage and access improvements.
- e. For several years, swimmers have requested a changing area be installed as a much needed improvement. The task force will work with the Parks & Recreation Commission to explore options for providing one.
- f. A dangerous plant, Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*), has been noted to be growing on the road edge in 2013. This sap of this plant causes rash and blisters when in contact on skin in the presence of sunlight. Efforts to remove the plant will be undertaken in 2014.

**IV. Public Safety** - While use increases, the safety of recreational users continues to be a priority for the Task Force.

- a. Chapter 90 funds were utilized for an engineering study of Lake Mansfield Road. Tighe & Bond was contracted for this work and provide an initial evaluation of alternative proposals for the road, including cost estimates for each. A traffic study was provided as well as recommendations for engineering of road improvements to address road improvements, bank stabilization, roadside and outflow drainage improvements, and options for improving safety in this multi-use recreation area. The task force was provided with an initial report in September 2013 and has devoted several meetings to the analysis and discussion of the information provided. This planning work will be continued in 2014 as the task force works at considering improvement options in terms of safety, affordability, and appropriateness for the park area. Concern over the continuing road degradation and the imperative of supporting safe use along Lake Mansfield Rd are of primary concern to the task force.

**V. Continued work in the Coming Year** - The Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force (LMITF) will continue to work to provide for the health and safe recreational use of the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area. We appreciate the Town's dedication to this invaluable natural resource and recreation area. We welcome and invite community input as we confront the complex issues inherent in the care and improvement of this much valued open space.

Provided by Christine Ward, Task Force Chair Person on December 16, 2013

## Attachment 2:

### Lake Mansfield Improvements – Divide and Conquer Approach (R. Dlugosz)

The following is a proposed idea to accomplish some of the needed improvements in an incremental manner as funding becomes available. I am calling it the divide and conquer approach. Each effort supports the overall goals in a manner that doesn't preclude doing the other efforts at some time in the future. While the various efforts have different levels of priority, a lower priority effort should be done if funding becomes available as long as it supports the overall goals and doesn't preclude other efforts from being done or cause additional expense when they are executed. Many of the efforts won't require community "buy-in" as they don't affect the community use of the space or roadway.

The efforts are not in any type of priority and are listed in geographical order proceeding south to north starting at the boat launch.

**Boat Launch Improvements:** Based on the Town Meeting approval, the wedge of property at the boat launch needs to be taken by eminent domain, and the area defined so that we can get the State involved in making necessary improvements.

**Knob Hill Drainage Project:** Now that this effort has been defined, application for 319 grant funding should be applied for in order to execute the project.

**Roadway Paving (Boat Launch to north end of the lake):** Based on Joe's estimate of around \$50K. Funding should be included in the CIP for this effort.

**Shoreline stabilization:** A plan should be developed to stabilize and re-establish the shoreline buffer zone from the boat launch to the beach area that is sensitive to the environment and allows for road improvements in key areas where the edge of the water is very near the roadway. Potential funding sources for this effort should be investigated.

**Pathway Development:** A proposed pathway should be laid out from the boat launch to the beach. The pathway could utilize some of the buffer area if space permits; otherwise it could extend into the roadway. Where it is impossible for both the path and a two-way road, we can determine if a choke point could be established in the roadway where traffic would have to pause to allow for oncoming traffic. This would essentially make the pathway as important as or slightly more important than the roadway.

**Parking Lot Reconfiguration:** A plan should be developed to lay-out a parking area that would support the parking needs of the recreation area as well as allow for a turn-around if a one-way roadway is implemented. This parking area should consider both normal parking requirements and over-flow parking if needed. Moving the roadway to the non-beach side of the parking area should be a consideration and part of the design.

**Overflow Reconstruction:** A plan should be established to re-do the outlet from the lake.

**Roadway Paving (north end of the lake to Christian Hill Road):** Funding should be included in the CIP for this effort.