

ROGERS LAKE AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF November 1, 2005

A meeting of the Rogers Lake Authority (RLA) was convened at the Rogers Lake Community Center on November 1, 2005 at 7:00 PM. The following members were present: Walter Buck, Rob Roach and Elizabeth Sunshine (secretary) of Lyme, and Roger Breunig, Brian Kyle, and Richard Smith of Old Lyme. Also noted in attendance were: Old Lyme First Selectman, Tim Griswold and approximately 50 lake area residents.

The RLA Chair, Fredrik Holth, was not present due to a traumatic foot injury. Brian Kyle was nominated and accepted the role of acting chair for the meeting. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

The Minutes of the September 13, 2005 meeting were submitted and approved with three corrections.

1. The name Rob Young should be Ralph Young
2. The words "as inferred" should be removed (page 3 paragraph 7)
3. A full transcript of speakers from said meeting will be available at both the Lyme and Old Lyme town halls.

AGENDA

1. Approval of minutes of past September 13, 2005 meeting.
2. Appoint acting chair
3. Presentation of letter by Frederik Holth
4. Motion to pursue weed management
5. Vote on motion
6. Motion to postpone other business in Fred's absence

A letter submitted by Fredrik Holth prior to his hospital stay and was read by Secretary Liz Sunshine. That letter follows:

ROGERS LAKE AUTHORITY
FREDRIK D. HOLTH, CHAIRMAN
159 BLOOD STREET
LYME, CT..06371

OCTOBER 28, 2005

TO: THE MEMBERS OF THE ROGERS LAKE AUTHORITY
FROM: FREDRIK HOLTH, CHAIRMAN

I regret that I will be unable to attend the November 1st meeting. As I've indicated, I've been hospitalized for a traumatic foot injury and will be in St. Raphael's Hospital from Sunday through Wednesday.

Through this letter, which I hope the acting chairman will read to the Authority members and attending public, I'd like to offer my thoughts as to any Authority decision regarding weed control recommendations.

After a public hearing is closed, to comply with the requirements of fair administrative procedure, no further public comments should be entertained other than those of the board members discussing and acting on a proposed recommendation preliminary to a vote. Although that was made clear at the last meeting, we continue to receive letters for and against herbicide use through the present, some unfairly condemning us for seemingly supporting herbicides as opposed to other alternatives.

I have delivered the materials from the poll taken at the September meeting. As to the vote conducted at that meeting 96 respondents were in favor of weed controls, 8 opposed; 76 were opposed to herbicide use, 27 in favor. Six contemporaneous letters opposed herbicides. At the same meeting, 111 survey letters sponsored by proponents of herbicide use were received (this figure eliminates four respondents who changed their vote following the September meeting).

During the thirty years during which I've been privileged to serve on the lake authority I've always expected that the outcry that has occurred would surface were we to even consider herbicides to control aquatic weeds. And while I did not look forward to that day coming,, a positive outlook as to current polarization is that it provides a good yardstick to measure the level of public interest and concern about the lake. One would hope that all the newly energized voices, both those opposed and favorable as to various control measures, will become involved and instrumental in changing the way in which we view and manage the lake.

For some residents the lake is merely an expansion of a back yard. For others it represents access to swimming or water sports. For still others it is primarily a traffic lane disrupting their privacy, particularly during the summer. For transient boaters it's a fishing hole, prime venue for jet skis, waterskiing or puttering about. For the rowing shells of early morning it's a mirror calm entry into the day.

All these interests must meld harmoniously on a lake that began to die the day it was formed; as we know, one key to sustaining that balance lies in limiting aquatic weed growth.

Following its recent lake study the lake authority's members have individually and exhaustively addressed multiple methods of aquatic weed control, and the viability of each. Unfortunately, the public clamor of people for and against only one of the presented alternatives, herbicide use, has been an elephant in the living room. I would hope that each activist who fired a volley for or against herbicides will stay actively involved in the cure regardless of the lake authority's final decision on this question.

What factors contribute to weed growth, and what can be done about it? Although the lake enjoys a 4,000 plus acre watershed that is virtually pollution free and thus has a significant present buffer against degradation, we know that changes in human behavior, limiting fertilization and runoff, zoning modifications, provision of buffer strips with evergreens and conifers and other similar measures would complement that natural protection.

Drought conditions obviously accelerate growth of rooted aquatic plants, which gain increased sunlight with decreased depth. Prior to our last meeting,, review of other area lakes and ponds showed them to be uniformly below normal levels by as much as several feet. The past several winters have also been marked by reduced periods and areas of ice coverage on the lake. Such reduced water depths and ice coverage as well as elevated water temperature from warm winters and summers favor milfoil and other aquatic plant development.

It's also important to weigh the impact of permanent global changes While the effects of global warming may make headlines as to hurricanes, another clear marker is the increased vegetative growth in Rogers Lake. Faced with global warming, it would seem that increased weed growth is not just a temporary phenomenon but one which may require annual remediation.

Which leads to the possible solutions. Several alternatives for aquatic vegetation control run into political quagmires. For example, if homeowners' claims to a protected right to their shallow wells are permitted to trump potential remedies such as draw downs and dredging, a policy decision must be made – and that is whether the public trust outweighs the cost to homeowners of a drilled well. Should this be a determination of the lake authority? Have we any jurisdiction ?

Though showing future promise, natural checks and balances are currently, from our study, unavailing. Although sterilized Asian carp might be a solution to vegetative growth, they may well consume all vegetation, and current state fishery requirements rule out this choice; similarly, a weevil that has proved a natural antagonist to Eurasian Millfoil, is being applied in many lakes in northern New England – unfortunately Rogers Lake does not suffer from Eurasian Millfoil. and the weevil abhors our variety.

As we have discussed at these many meetings, I believe that dredging is an optimal solution, particularly where extensive shallow areas foster weed growth. The difficulty with dredging is, of course, the prodigious expense. The only feasible way to finance such dredging might be to stockpile removed silt in a containment area, permitting underlying gravel removal as a commercial venture, then replacing the silt in the deepened basins created. However permanent a dredging solution might be, it should be clear that considerable disruption would accompany the process.

And we looked at herbicides. It should be clear that we had the obligation, regardless of general public alarm as to using herbicides, to fully explore this alternative. Having provided ample opportunity to the opponents of herbicide usage to articulate a well founded scientific basis to preclude application, I confess to being personally dismayed at the largely anecdotal objections voiced at our September meeting. In fairness, however it was not the job of those opposed to herbicide usage to examine alleged hazards of its implementation. That was and remains our job.

From review of the literature, peer reviewed articles, discussions with very knowledgeable taxonomists, biologists, applicators, other lake associations and authorities, manufacturers materials, and state and federal studies and application standards, I fail to see that the herbicides proposed represent any significant threat to the water column, biota, wells of abutting property owners or downstream water bodies.

Contrarily, however, the binding of Diquat and other herbicides with bottom sediments represents a possible long term effect with no clear expiration. Accordingly, and given the possibility, if not probability, that at some future time dredging may remove significant amounts of these sediments for offsite or onsite disposal, there is a quite logical basis for deferring involvement with herbicides unless they become the only available vehicle.

The alternative of hand pulling by SCUBA divers has been ventured. While this alternative might be feasible on a smaller pond, I believe that the time required, attendant risk, and interference with navigation would be extraordinary. The fringe benefit of hand pulling is that fragmentation, and, hence, propagation would be unlikely to occur. However, in Rogers Lake, the sheer volume of boat traffic guarantees that such dissemination will occur in any event.

All of which leaves the alternative of harvesting. Complemented by hydro-raking of individual properties, which we have approved, this is a costlier alternative than herbicides. It would seem that to conduct harvesting through third party contractors would involve considerable annual expense. But the benefits of following this path, for one or perhaps two seasons, if successful, would seem to be as follows:

1. It would permit an evaluation of the benefits and time requirements of the technique at moderate expense before requesting expenditure by the two towns for the cost of a harvester, conveyor to load material on a truck, and trailer for the harvester, all totaling, from one estimate about \$110,000 for a unit capable of transporting two tons of weeds ;

2. Selective cutting would clear navigation channels, minimizing inconvenience for boaters and fishermen;

3. Removed material, after drying, could be made available as compost at town landfills or used as intermediate cover in those facilities;

4. Achievable depths of six or more feet, despite regeneration rates, would seemingly limit cutting to two passes per season;

5. It represents a minimal interference with the environment and lake resources;

6. Control draft on the harvester can be as little as 18 inches permitting treatment even in the boat launch area.

7. It permits selective response, in timely fashion, where changes of temperature, lake levels, nutrient alteration or other factors create an immediate need.

I accordingly would vote, were I present, in favor of actively pursuing weed management by harvesting, with an eye to acquisition of the equipment in the longer term to enable town crews or volunteers to perform this function.

If any member of the Authority sees fit to raise approval of this solution by motion, I would greatly appreciate a second on same and a vote, which if affirmative will preclude any need to consider and/or to presently exclude the remaining alternatives.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Fred Holth

FDH/hw

Brian Kyle made a motion that the Rogers Lake Authority pursue weed management by harvesting for up to two years, after or during which time we assess the success or failure of harvesting as the weed management of choice and redirect the remedial action as necessary.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

It was noted that Fred Holth is an integral part of the committee and that new business should be postponed until the next meeting when he is out of the hospital.

A motion was made to adjourn due to the above.

Motion was succeeded by light discussion of thoughts & ideas exchanged on how the public can help address the issues at hand. Ideas were brought up for a safer/cleaner lake, management of shallow wells, raking falling leaves before they get blown into the lake, and if necessary for use, different types of environmentally friendly fertilization by various persons present.

Next Meeting of the RLA is scheduled for December 13, 2005 at 7:00 PM, and will be held at the West Shores Association Community Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted by

Elizabeth E. Sunshine
Secretary