

Lake Beseck Environment Committee Meeting

Wednesday February 27, 2019, Community Center

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm.

2. Members Present

Amy Poturnicki, Randy Bernotas, John Lindner, Rick Santos, Hannah Malcolm, Ed Bailey, Matt Voyt and Larry Marsicano were also present. Rebecca Adams joined the meeting at 7:07pm. Darin Overton joined the meeting at 7:24 and departed at 7:55.

3. Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

4. Matt Voyt, New England Aquatic Services – Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting

Matt described the services NEAS provides as “alternatives to pesticides.” He described in detail the process: two divers, using pontoon boats, go down with suction tubes and pull up as much material as possible (as opposed to cutting the plants). They bag up the material and cart it offsite. Billing is by the hour, (\$300/hr for two divers) and they customize work and billing based on the job. They can scale up from an individual hourly rate to cover a larger job.

Rick Santos asked if they could accommodate a protected species, and Matt indicated they could educate their divers to identify the plant in question, or possibly block off the affected areas to avoid impacting the plants.

Ed Bailey asked how the plant material is handled once it’s sucked up; Matt indicated sometimes it can be dropped at a local brush dump site. If not, NEAS can take it back to their facility, although that’s a long trip so they recommend local dumping if possible.

Hannah Malcolm asked how often the work has to be done (in other words, how long do the plants stay cleared). Matt stated it depends on the type of soil, the type of plant, and how heavy the growth is. “You’re always going to have regrowth, but the plan would be to keep beating back the growth so that each year, it doesn’t come back as strong the next year, and each year you have to do less.”

Matt stated no permit is needed for suction harvesting, as long as soil isn’t being removed. Larry Marsicano, however, noted that that DEEP is going to insist on an assessment of the status of the state-listed species (*p. vaseyi*) before any work is done in Lake Beseck.

In response to Randy Bernotas’ question, Matt estimated that in a single hour, his group could probably clear a 20’x20’ patch. The goal, if everything goes well, would be to clear 1/8 of an acre per day. Amy

Poturnicki pointed out that there are 120 acres in the lake, but the intent would be to just clear the areas around docks and recreation areas. Matt noted this type of cleanup is a lot of the work they do.

Rick Santos asked how an area could be cleared if it's too shallow for divers; Matt said they could still use the suction in shallow areas by hand-pulling the plants and feeding them into the suction hose.

Matt went on to describe the machinery NEAS uses – most of the boat is metal grating and they use mesh bags, so the water sucked up with the plants returns immediately to the lake.

Matt talked about the challenge of getting up the “root ball” when pulling milfoil; if you can get the whole root ball up, you reduce the chances that the plant will return. Pondweed involves trying to pull up the entire root, moving along and trying not to break the line.

Amy asked about the timing of the work. Matt said it's a matter of doing it within the growing season; depending on the project, it makes sense to work earlier around docks so homeowners can enjoy the entire season (June/July). However, less mass gets pulled the earlier in the season the work is done. Larger projects can be done later in the season. Amy noted that it might be better to have the work done later, when the milfoil comes in after the curlyleaf pondweed. Matt agreed that if milfoil is the bigger concern then later would be better.

Matt said his question would be what the state would require to protect the protected species, whether it be a physical setback and/or education courtesy of Mark June-Wells.

John and Randy both speculated on how bad the weed situation has been in recent years, and where the worst growth occurs. Amy remarked that this year may provide a good picture of how bad the problem is becoming because there was no winter drawdown.

Matt noted that his company's services might not be as cost-effective if we were aiming to control, for instance, 20 acres of heavy milfoil infestation in the middle of the lake. His company is more effective for control in specific, smaller areas such as around docks or swim areas.

Matt also provided his expertise on benthic barriers and their effectiveness. His company does install and remove/clean the barriers each season; they have had good success at keeping areas clear, although he cautioned that if the water is too shallow or heavy boat action keeps the water too disturbed, barriers might not be effective.

Ed Bailey asked about whether it is worthwhile to have barriers down for only a short period of time, such as at the swim area at the start of the season. Matt mentioned that if the swim area is six feet or more deep, you can leave the barriers in place and there's usually no problem with people walking on them. He said he has heard about lakes having success with putting barriers in early, and then removing them, and being able to keep the plants at bay for the rest of the summer.

Matt indicated he would be happy to come take a look at our lake and provide free estimates. Rick Santos suggested dock owners might be willing to share the cost, and it would get people more involved in the process.

Ed Bailey noted that the first challenge is to get a permit; once that is in place, dock owners would be able to avail themselves of Matt's services. Matt noted that his company is a contractor for the state and does some work for them.

5. Larry Marsicano, AER Report - Annual Report, Legislation for Lake Funding, Project Permits

Larry described the pending legislation that will require boats to purchase a stamp, the proceeds of which will be used to increase ramp monitors on the CT river to control hydrilla, which is rapidly becoming a serious problem. Funding will also then also be available for grants to fund invasive species control. Larry passed out the proposed language and a sample letter of support and encouraged members to contact their representatives and support the bill.

Larry also gave an overview of the year's work he did on the lake for AER. Some indicators of lake health are improving; Secchi depth transparency is greater, although the lake was stratified as early as May. Clarity was good until late August, although the lake still becomes anoxic, when mixing does not occur. Nutrient levels were "modest" up until late August, when nutrients build up from both runoff and the lake bottom itself. Larry answered questions from Ed Bailey about how the amount of rain impacts water clarity and algae growth. He talked about how algae levels were very good until August-October, when blue-green algae became more common, but were not a major concern this past year. Larry talked about the life cycle of blue-green algae, which he believes is key to understanding how to manage algae.

Larry also mentioned that Mark has done a statistical analysis of water quality from 2014-2019. He praised Mark's ability to analyze data and said that, based on Mark's analysis, the trend in general is looking good for the lake; phosphorous and nitrogen are both going down, and oxygen levels are going up. He mentioned that wind and rain, which stir up the lake, can be both a help and a problem; the help comes when stirring the water gets more oxygen into the lower levels of the lake.

Larry praised the committee for the work it has done, especially with outreach and education, and cited examples of how Candlewood & Brookfield Lakes have leveraged land use regulations to control impervious surface and force owners who add impervious surface to their property to come up with storm water management plans to ameliorate the situation they are creating.

Rebecca noted that this would be a good item for P&Z and Inland Wetlands to work together to have language to make sure homeowners take the right steps. Ed Bailey noted that P&Z plans to revisit and update their regulations this year; Rebecca said she would work with P&Z as chair of Inland Wetlands to incorporate the appropriate language.

Larry described some proposed changes to the AER's monitoring of Lake Beseck going forward -- including changes to the number and types of trips to monitor specific lake data -- which have been provided to Ed and Amy. He went over the responses to committee questions that Mark June-Wells had provided via email.

6. Hannah Malcolm, Park & Recreation Report, display Lake Bottom Blanket

Hannah brought a mat for committee members to see. She and Amy explained the features of the mats; the ten mats that were purchased won't cover the entire swim area but will cover a large portion. The mats include slots for rebar that will hold them in place and holes to allow gasses to pass through. Hannah showed a video of the mats being installed.

Hannah and Ed Bailey talked about additional plans to continue to improve the beach area. She also mentioned there will be work at the dog park as well this summer.

7. Spring Projects and Outreach

Amy has been talking with Greg Bugbee of the CT Agricultural Experimental Station about education projects for the committee and the public, and has scheduled the following events:

4/18, 9:00am, Greg will come out with the state boat and help install 80% of the mats.

4/27, 10:00am Greg will come out again and the public, including managers of other lakes, would be invited to come see the rest of the mats being installed. Randy said he would invite Bayshan Lake, and the invitation will go out on the CFL emailing list. Coffee and snacks will probably be served.

Committee members discussed whether the plant sale should happen again this year. Amy pointed out that most of the infrastructure is now in place so a sale would be easy to hold again. John Lindner said he thought the sale had been a success. Members agreed the sale would happen again this year.

Amy mentioned that if homeowners want to install mats, DEEP is going to insist upon a plant survey before issuing permits. The timing of the study is going to make work in 2019 challenging, and the cost is high (\$2825). Rick Santos recommended surveying the lakeside homeowners to determine interest. Ed Bailey recommended a mailing to homeowners. Committee members discussed how homeowners might respond to the estimated cost and amount of labor & time involved in utilizing the mats; Amy advocated letting the survey/permitting process run this year to set any interested homeowners up to start using mats next year; Ed Bailey agreed.

Motion to fund the plant survey for this year made by Rebecca Adams and seconded by John Lindner. Passed unanimously.

8. Selectman Report

Ed expressed his approval for all the hard work the committee has done and emphasized that Larry Marsicano's report brings encouraging news of the lake's improving health. He indicated funding for the committee's activities will continue. Ed handed out a flyer from RiverCog showing rain barrel and composting machines for sale.

9. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the October 24, 2018 meeting without changes made by Daria Vander Veer and seconded by Amy Poturnicki. Passed unanimously.

10. Misc.

Rick Santos mentioned he has been asked by residents about the restoration of the lighthouse in Fowler Development and how such a project could be funded.

11. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17pm.