

DRAFT
PRELIMINARY LAKE LILLINONAH AUTHORITY SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JUNE 3, 2010
7:30PM
BROOKFIELD TOWN HALL
ROOM 228

CALL TO ORDER: B Piepho began the meeting at 7:30pm. Present were: B. Piepho, B. Boodry, B. Gates, First Light & Power, J. Puhalski, Connecticut Bass Federation Nation, J. Ball, Friends of the Lake, and E. Machowski – CT. DEP Fisheries

DISCUSSION:

B. Piepho stated that he has been recreational fishing on Lake Lillinonah for twenty years, J. Puhalski said that he also has been to Lake Lillinonah for twenty years as well, and J. Ball stated that he has been to Lake Lillinonah for thirty years.

1. Current Fish Species Availability – The current fish special available at Lake Lillinonah are: Largemouth Bass, Small Mouth Bass, Northern Pike, Crappie, White Perch, Yellow Perch, Alewife, Shiner, Carp, Bluegill, Catfish and Rock Bass. After much discussion, the consensus was that all were pleased with the species balance goals of fish and felt there was no need to add to. E. Machowski stated that there is enough forage for the game fish. Perception is that Large Mouth and Small Mouth catch rates are down and that catch sizes are smaller.

B. Piepho stated that Pat Mohan of Candlewood Bait & Tackle thinks that Bass Fishing on Lake Lillinonah is way down and that Candlewood Lake is way better. Fishing tournaments on Lake Lillinonah are getting 8 bass weigh in at 15# and largest fish at 3.5#, whereas Candlewood is getting 8 bass weigh in the 30# and largest fish at 5.5#. E. Machowski said Candlewood Lake may be the best Bass lake in the east. E. Machowski said that fishing success boils down to the amount of habitat for the fish, Candlewood has tons of weeds and Lake Lillinonah has almost none. E. Machowski went on to say that we clearly need to set a goal of improving Lake Lillinonah's habitat.

B. Piepho stated that he would like to put on the record a comment from Rich Newman, Newtown Bait and Tackle commented that, "Whoever put Pike in the lake should be shot – they are going to take over the whole lake." E. Machowski stated that he would like to counter with the following comment, "Pike will eat Bass, and Bass will eat young Pike, so it is a wash." B. Piepho stated that the province of Ontario did a big study about the bass/ pike relationship and found that pike do not reduce the quality of bass fishing and found that bass are actually larger and more aggressive when pike are in the same lake. E. Machowski stated that he was familiar with this study and agrees with it. B. Piepho went on to say that the pike will also reduce the white perch and yellow perch population that eats both bass eggs and bass fry, so bass population will increase from fewer perch. J. Puhalski stated felt that the White Perch population should be decreased. E. Machowski also stated that the very young White Perch acts as a forage base for other fish beside pike. Once the large predator load is up to where it is supposed to be, the number of White Perch will decrease.

E. Machowski said that Walleyes are located in Candlewood Lake via the Squantz Pond outlet now with very small population. Walleye will be placed in Lake Zoar on Friday, June 4, 2010. Walleyes spawn in fast water and rocky shoal. The fish will be coming from the State Fishery in West Virginia

and are small fry in size. He also said that he is not opposed to putting Walleyes in Lake Lillinonah, but recommended waiting approximately ten years to revisit and check on the Bass and Pike population.

E. Machowski stated that he would like to get a population estimate on the Pike, but would also like to have an angler survey done. According to Bob Jacobs, head of the Lake and Project, Lake Lillinonah will be put on the list for the survey for next year for all species. Because of all the years of electric fishing data, Lake Lillinonah is being put on the list to get additional spring and fall samples for the next couple of years. This survey will show data points historically as well as currently. Then we can see trends and see that harvests are a lot higher than thought.

2. Safety of Fish Consumption – E. Machowski stated that consumption has not changed dramatically as far as advisory goes according to the latest report dated 2009. There is an overall decline in most fish species – PCB wise. Some fish still exceed the 2ppm limit. Attached to the minutes is an angler's guide list showing which fish are safe, contaminant, low risk/high risk group, i.e. eat one Bass only once per month, DO NOT EAT PIKE.

B. Piepho stated that fishing on Lake Lillinonah should not be degraded because of consumption.

3. Fish Habitat for Security and Spawning –

J. Puhlaski stated the PCB Enhancement Funds have been approved, but monies have not been dolled out as of yet. CT Bass is short listed for wood structure fish habitat enhancement on Lake Lillinonah. B Piepho stated that the LLA has not signed off on it yet.

B. Piepho stated that Lake Lillinonah has had a milfoil eradication program for approximately ten years. This eradication is done every two years. One mile of shoreline will be done in total. Sections of New Milford, by Bridgewater homes, below Lovers Leap, Barkwood Cove and entrance to Pond Brook Cove are the targeted areas. Those are the only areas that will be treated with diquat. Resident's complain about milfoil near their homes. E. Machowski will give B. Piepho the number of Nancy Murray, Plant Expert. She may have some ideas that are more environmentally friendly.

B. Gates stated that First Light and Power is as part of their license, working with a Connect ad station to identify nuisance plant density on all of the lakes. Satellite imagery can detect available milfoil and other nuisance plants. Nuisance plants are being looked at, not native plants. J. Puhalski, J. Ball, E. Marchowski stated they were all against further milfoil removal. E. Machowski stated that percentage may be more than we think.

B. Piepho stated that a wood eradication program is intended to get the wood that is truly floating wood, and that same floating wood is going to go where the wind takes it. First Light and Power is doing eradication with floating wood. Any fallen tree attached to the shore should not be removed, but it has been. J. Ball stated that wood attached to the shore needs to remain as it is needed for small fish. B. Gates said that he is going out on the lake with DEP and Lake Lillinonah Authority members to look at various pockets and prioritize which areas are to be removed. E. Machowski stated that it would be a good idea to identify certain logs to have anchored. B. Piepho thought that this would be a liability issue. E. Machowski said that DEP has been anchoring habitat in rivers and streams and feel that anchoring can be safely done. B. Boodry and B. Piepho both felt that the Lake Lillinonah Authority needs to consider anchoring debris as an enhancement to the wood removal program.

4. Water Quality – B. Piepho stated that Lake Lillinonah is pretty much a one temperature water column and that there is no stratifying going on in the water. This has to do with the hydro plant coming out at forty feet in the channel sucking cold water and rolling over the upper water to the lower water. Nothing can be done about this. The water temperature has been high, in the 70's.

Water Level Management – B. Piepho stated that 99% of the year First Light will modulate between water elevation 196 and 193.8; which equates to 2 ½ ft, is all they are doing (sea level). One scheduled draw down usually takes place the last week of October at 5 ½ ft. Lake Lillinonah Authority would like to have this done in November instead of October for this year. The Lake is kept down for two weekends for management.

Flood Control Fluctuation – First Light is dictated by flood control. Lake Lillinonah is stable in May. Unfortunately, Lake Lillinonah needs to go down for heavy snow melt or rainfall. B. Piepho said to B. Gates that holding water levels low in March, in lieu of fluctuation up and down was good for Pike spawn. E. Machowski stated that Pike will not be successful spawning in Lake Lillinonah regardless of water level, so First Light and Power said that the water level can fluctuate in March. Fluctuation in April and May would not be good for Bass spawn.

Oxygen Levels – Lake Lillinonah is good on oxygen levels. E. Machowski stated that he did testing of oxygen levels on Lake Lillinonah in August and was surprise at how deep the oxygen levels stayed good. He questioned whether the the confluence of the Housatonic and Shepaug area was actually benefitting from First Lights oxygen diffuser system. B. Gates stated that First Light and Power has three trunks, 3700 ft. long from the dam, which were placed in the very lowest part of the lake from Shepaug up, using a depth finder. When the deepest part was found, a pipe was laid there. The pipe is buoyant, about 10-15 ft. from the bottom, so the sediment is not being disturbed. Two pipes are running now. There has been no change in fisheries since the pipes were laid. E. Machowski stated that he will call Ken Seahall of Watertown, who fishes Lake Lillinonah regularly and has caught fish deep near the oxygen diffusers to contact B. Piepho to discuss which fish species are holding in the oxygen differs.

Algae Levels – This has to do with phosphorus levels. The perception of the Lake Lillinonah Authority is that the water quality is better in the summer. This is due to the Pittsfield Sewage Plant and the Danbury Sewage Plant dropping its phosphorus from 3000ppb to 1000ppb. In the summer Danbury is now dropping phosphorus to 500ppb. When there is little phosphorus, algae is reduced. B. Piepho stated that the Lake Lillinonah Authority has a copper sulfate shocking program. They will be shocking the first 1000ft. where the Shepaug River comes in. They will also be shocking through Lovers Leap down to Good Year Island over the sand bar and the Still River mouth. This will occur every two weeks from July 1st through the first week in September. Barkwood Cove is done once per month.

5. Fish Stocking –

Northern Pike via LLA – with the help of DEP, Lake Lillinonah has stocked in the last five years 1,000 adult Pike 12-14 inches in size. E. Machowski stated that there was approximately 500-1000 Pike before the Lake Lillinonah Authority starting putting the fish in. The Pike population in Lake Lillinonah is approximately 2,000 today. B. Piepho stated that the LLA wants Northern Pike to be plentiful enough for sport fishing because people have seen that Lake Lillinonah produced the state record Northern Pike and have been disappointed when they have found them so hard to catch. The state record Northern Pike is probably the most notable about Lake Lillinonah.

Northern Pike via DEP – Fish was added because DEP has Lake Lillinonah slated for a Pike lake and to control the White Perch population. DEP was adding fish from an overflow from a hatchery in

Bantam and a Kent Marsh. There was a blowout five years ago of the dam at Kent Marsh and could not give Lake Lillinonah any fish, so Lake Lillinonah Authority got their own.

Kent Marsh – Produces some of the nicest Pike in the west side of the state. However, due to leakage around the existing outlet structures, and the dikes leaking a fair amount of loss and hard to control water, draws marshes down, and could not get fishes out. As part of the RT. 7 bypass in Brookfield, the DEP was looking for mitigation, ran out of mitigation on site, so they stayed in the Housatonic and asked if they would like to redo the dikes and control structures at the two spawning marshes. Marshes should be up and running in the spring of 2011. About 1500 5-6 inch fish will be stocked in Lake Lillinonah annually with a 5% survival rate.

E. Machowski stated that he would like to take another population estimate on Lake Lillinonah next spring.

6. Fishing Regulations – B. Piepho stated that he would like to promote fiberglass trophy fish mounts in lieu of killing trophy for taxidermy mount. E. Machowski stated that he will send out a blurb about fiberglass mounts in his informational flyer with the angler survey. An angler survey is given out to all anglers on how to rig, and take measurements. Pictures, weight, and size should be noted. E. Machowski stated that the regulations for lakes, statewide, should be kept cohesive. The current pike state regulation is 26 inches for Pike, which allows harvest a trophy. A state record, 29 # Northern Pike was set with Lake Lillinonah in 1980. This fish is mounted and in a glass case in the DEP Harwington office. E. Machowski stated that some changes in regulation may be considered after the 2011 fishing survey.

7. Other – Housatonic River Bleachery Dam in New Milford –E. Machowski stated that the dam creates an attraction for a direct fishery around the dam. B. Piepho stated that New Milford wants to keep the Housatonic River wide through down town , aesthetically, instead of a natural river running through New Milford. This statement is according to the Mayor of New Milford.

E. Machowski stated that he would speak to Steve Gephardt to come and speak with the Lake Lillinonah Authority regarding fish passage for the bleachery. He stated that if you can get good passage, it would be a benefit. J. Puhalski, J. Ball, B. Piepho all think a fish passage at the Bleachery Dam would be very beneficial. B. Piepho stated that the Lake Lillinonah Authority had a fish bypass proposal in the PCB Fund Project list, however, the request was not short listed. One of the reasons given for not funding the project was that fish in Lake Lillinonah don't migrate. E. Machowski strongly disagreed and stated that Pike, Bass, and Trout will use a bypass and the fishing will improve. B. Gates stated that a bypass could be installed at the current dam where the original bleachery water wheel was located. The current metal blank off is leaking and could easily be removed.

E. Machowski said that he would keep everyone posted on the development of the angler survey for next year.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made by B. Boodry, seconded by B. Piepho, to adjourn the meeting. Motion was passed unanimously. Meeting ended at 9:47 pm.