

Core Group for a Permanent Solution
March 8, 2010

Present: Mac Ray, Jackie Conant, Judy Hamilton, Gary Dougherty, Polly Bussiere, Rusty Knight, Larry Giroux, Rob Turnbull and Mitzie Turnbull, Mary Standard (Sun Journal), Biff and Mary Atwater, Bill Gray, Rep. Sheryl Briggs, Francis Brautigam and Leon Bucher from Inland Fisheries & Wildlife [IF&W]

Canton Town Meeting vote: Mac requested support from Canton voters for the town warrant article to give the Canton select board the authority to sell unneeded portions of the two municipal lots adjacent to the dam with the proceeds to go into the dam funds for a new replacement dam.

Boat ramp and public access to the lake - Several locations have been under consideration by the State for public access to Lake Anasagunticook. The two most talked about are the privately-owned/publicly-used boat ramp on Rt. 140 and upstream of the temporary dam/proposed site of the replacement dam on Whitney Brook. Development of a public boat launch on municipal property above the dam is favored because it is off a major highway, offers adequate trailer access and parking for a lake of this size, encourages use of Canton center with its water connection to the lake, and promotes a partnership between the State and our local communities. IF&W supports the restoration of a dam on Whitney Brook to protect coldwater fisheries and stocking of the lake. A replacement dam would also be needed to provide adequate water levels in the brook for commonly used boat access to the lake.

Regional Fisheries Biologist, Francis Brautigam, addressed our concerns of an invasive plant infestation. He said that locating boat access on the outlet brook of the lake would lower the risks. A boat washing station is considered cost effective only on lakes already infested. However, building a boat ramp in Canton would allow for inspection or surveillance that is missing with use of multiple private accesses.

Leon Bucher, IF&W Water Access Coordinator, explained two possible ways for the State to get involved. MDIF&W receives its funding through USIF&W sport fishing restoration with federal gas taxes for public access projects on Maine lakes. Federal funds will pay for up to 3/4 of the costs of land acquisition and development of a site. The State must have a legal interest in the property through purchase or a permanent easement to insure public use. Routine maintenance is generally the responsibility of the local community and IF&W is responsible for major repairs and upgrades.

Grants are also available through the Department of Conservation, under the direction of George Powell, to develop public boat access. A portion of Maine's gas sales tax is used to work on state or municipally owned properties to build water access. For the life of these projects (generally 20 years) the site must be maintained and open to the public.

An environmental health assessment of the property will be required for IF&W consideration of the dam site. Because of the tannery use of the dam, a higher-level assessment (ground sampling over checking of records and looking for obvious signs of contamination) is expected. This must be done before IF&W can commit to the project. An environmental assessment will also be required as part of the CDBG funding process. The purposed boat launch is several hundred feet above the old dam and might be considered in a different light. Judy will contact Bob Thompson at AVCOG concerning this assessment and keep IF&W involved with such an assessment.

Public access to Canton Lake is on a priority list with IF&W. Once a clean environmental health report is secured, IF&W ownership/easement interest would be determined and the town, planning board and voters would be involved in the planning, permitting, and completion. There was significant support for this project and we will continue to seek to partner with IF&W for boat access upstream of the dam.

Plans for a Capital Campaign Biff Atwater and Bill Gray filled us in on the lake association's plans for a capital campaign to raise the cash match for the CDBG funds. Biff presented a mission statement, top-down flow chart of addressing fundraising issues, 3 giving scenarios and a campaign slogan of "Let's give a dam together". They anticipate needing three to five years to meet a goal of this size and therefore, will encourage pledges as well as donations. The plan is to raise 30% of the \$165K goal (\$50,000) before kicking off the campaign. Once the CDBG funds are available, a town meeting will be required to accept the funds. The campaign kick-off would be scheduled to make the best use of these events and announcements to move the dam project into the next phase.

Family challenges, memorials, letters, phone calls and individual contacts are proposed. Ideas as to how to recognize memorials and large donations are being explored. Engraving bricks in a wall façade on the route 140 side of the dam, engraving granite benches, and plaques are being considered. Mac asked that we think about how to make these commemorations, along with cost estimates, to present at our next meeting.

A question was raised as to how and whether the capital campaign fits into the project IF Canton should not receive CDBG funds in 2010. If not this year, CDBG funds would be sought for 2011 and the temporary dam would continue to maintain summer water levels. A "Plan B" needs to be formulated to keep the project moving forward and the assumption is that the capital campaign would continue and make adjustments as needed.

Next Meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 22nd at the Canton town office.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Hamilton, Secretary