

OSSIPEE LAKE REPORT

TOWNS CONSIDER THE COST OF MILFOIL AS MORE IS FOUND

Key Dates:

- **Tuesday, March 8th:** Freedom Town Meeting & elections, 9 AM. Town Hall.
- **Tuesday March 8th:** Ossipee elections, 10 AM-7 PM, Town Hall.
- **Tuesday, March 8th:** Effingham elections, 11 AM-7 PM. Town Hall.
- **Wednesday, March 9th:** Ossipee Town Meeting, 6:30 PM, Town Hall.
- **Saturday, March 12th:** Effingham Town Meeting, 9 AM, Town Hall.

The logic is inescapable: unless State funding for milfoil control is increased, local communities will have to figure out how to pay for it.

The town of Ossipee is facing that fact as it considers the cost of a second clean-up of the Phillips Brook-Leavitt Bay infestation, and an initial treatment of a new mass of the destructive weed that was found last summer in Portsmouth Cove between Leavitt Bay and Broad Bay.

How much will the town have to pay? The answer isn't simple. While the State's policy is to pay for initial control treatments of new infestations and half of the cost of a second treatment, there's a hitch: there usually isn't enough money in the budget to pay for all of the treatments that are requested by lake communities across the State.



Diver Dennis Holbrook gets ready to pull another batch of milfoil from Danforth Pond. Nearly 10,000 pounds of the destructive weeds have been removed in a pilot program sponsored by the Alliance and the Town of Freedom. *Alliance Photo*

According to Ken Warren of the Department of Environmental Services, the State's 2005 control budget is \$60,000 – the same as it was last year. That makes it likely that Warren and his DES colleagues will once again have to make difficult

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Ossipee Lake, Broad Bay, Leavitt Bay, Berry Bay, and Danforth Pond.

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A HIGHER WATER LEVEL IN THE FALL, BUT NOT THIS YEAR

In a new policy established by dam authority officials, the level of the lake will be kept constant through Columbus Day before the gates are opened to bring the water down to its winter level to accommodate ice.

While the policy is effective immediately, it won't be implemented until 2006 because of a scheduled early draw-down that will start after

Labor Day this summer.

The new policy was established after State and local officials held a public meeting in October to solicit input from lake property owners and boaters. About a dozen people attended the meeting, and most of them spoke in favor of keeping the lake at its summer height during the fall for easier

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EARLY DRAW-DOWN OF THE LAKE IS PLANNED FOR LABOR DAY

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boat navigation.

Prior to the new ruling, the level of the lake was allowed to fall gradually from the June 1st height of 407.25' to approximately 407' in August and 406.5' in October.

The new policy will keep the level at 407.25' through Columbus Day weekend, after which many seasonal residents close up for the winter. The level of the lake is measured by an electronic gauge near Westward Shores.

Steve Doyon, an engineer with the Dam Bureau of the Department of Environmental Services' Water Division, sees minimal impact from the new policy, saying that "The maintenance of more constant summer season levels should facilitate recreational activities and lake access, while not jeopardizing shorefront development with higher levels than are currently seen."

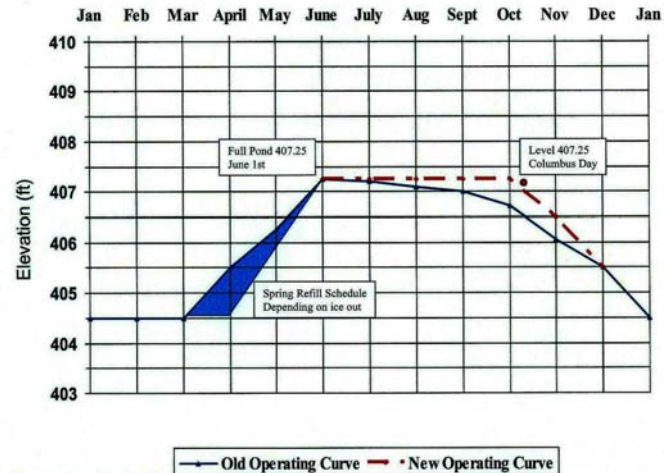
Meanwhile, a scheduled early draw-down will prevent the new policy from being implemented this year. Starting on Labor Day, the lake will be drawn down to its winter level of 404.5'.

John Picard heads the Ossipee Lake Dam Authority, which is DES' local partner in managing the lake. He says the early draw-down this year, which was approved by Ossipee and Freedom Selectmen last fall, is part of the State's recommended plan that the lake be drawn down early every eight to ten years.

"An early draw-down gives DES an opportunity to survey the lake's deltas, levies, and waterways, which is usually done by taking aerial pictures from helicopters. It also gives lake property owners a chance to arrange for work to be done on their shoreline."

A number of lake property owners report

Ossipee Lake
Operating Rule Curve



Source: NH DES, Water Division, Dam Bureau

Broken line shows the lake level being held constant until after Columbus Day, per a new State policy that will be implemented in 2006. Source: NHDES



TO OUR READERS

- **Ossipee Lake Report** is available in color on the web at: www.ossipeelake.org.
- **Ossipee Lake News** delivers free up to the minute information about the lake by e-mail, as events warrant. Contact: subscribe@ossipeelake.org.
- Report mail address changes to: mail@ossipeelake.org, or send to P.O. Box 173, Freedom, NH 03836.



The Alliance is a member of the New Hampshire Lakes Association.

that they have already contacted state agencies to obtain the necessary permits for shoreline work. The last early draw-down of the lake was in 1994 when the dam's five floodgates were replaced.

The timing of draw-downs is important for many reasons, including the unpredictability of the weather.

In November, while the lake was slowly draining toward 404.5', six inches of rain fell and raised the level of the water to flood stage, causing State officials to rush to the site and accelerate the draw-down. A similar situation in 2003 resulted in ice damage in multiple locations on the lake when the water level rose to flood stage and then froze solid.

Picard says that when the new high water policy is implemented in 2006, the speed of the drawn-down will be accelerated after Columbus Day to hedge against sudden late season rainfalls.

DES is developing an interactive website that will track information and data associated with the Ossipee Lake watershed, including the lake level, discharge at the dam, and inflow to the lake from the Bearcamp River. Questions or comments about the management of Ossipee Lake may be directed to sdoyon@des.state.nh.us.

GROWING COSTS FOR MILFOIL CONTROL RAISE QUESTIONS

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decisions on which towns are funded, and at what level.

State funding is further complicated by the growing interest in using professional divers to hand-pull the weeds as an alternative to treating them with aquatic herbicides. Diving has yielded promising results in a number of tests, but it is expensive.

In October, Ossipee Lake Alliance and Freedom officials arranged for divers to remove nearly 10,000 pounds of milfoil from Danforth Pond and Danforth Brook, where the infestations had reached a critical stage. The town paid the \$8,500 bill with money from its milfoil control fund, established by voters at last year's Town Meeting, supplemented by private donations.

The decision to test the more expensive method of hand-pulling came as the result of last year's failure of Diquat, an aquatic herbicide, to control the milfoil in Phillips Brook-Leavitt Bay. After being treated in June, the weeds died back but returned in full force in a matter of weeks, according to Alliance milfoil program coordinator June D'Andrea.

"A more powerful herbicide like 2-4-D would have knocked the weeds out for a year or more, but we couldn't use it because of the close proximity of drinking water wells."

Given the limited options for a second treatment, D'Andrea recommended that Ossipee hire divers for Phillips Brook-Leavitt Bay and have them clean out Portsmouth Cove at the same time. The estimate for the work is \$15,000. Ossipee still has \$5,000 in its 2004 milfoil control fund, and the Alliance has applied to the State for the remainder.

"While the State says it will give the same consideration to funding divers as it does to funding chemical treatments," D'Andrea says, "we have to remember we're just one of many lake towns applying for funds."

Whatever funding formula is eventually



As divers pull milfoil from the bottom, volunteers monitor the surface and shoreline to catch fragments of the weeds with nets. Even tiny fragments can start new infestations. *Alliance Photo*

derived, it will have to be for the long term, since researchers have not found a way to eradicate the weed.

Property owners on Belleau Lake in Wakefield, who have been fighting milfoil for years, estimate they have spent close to \$30,000 on control treatments over and beyond the funds that the State has provided. Last year they turned to their town for help and received \$5,000 toward the next \$7,000 treatment.

In an interview with the Carroll County Independent, lake property owner Stephen Boudreau called milfoil a community issue, estimating that the town's \$5,000 contribution to the clean-up is about 1 percent of what lakefront property owners pay to the town in taxes.

"If that lake dies, and it's no longer a recreational lake, property values will go down the tubes and that's going to lower your real estate tax base," he told the paper.

State realtors specializing in lakefront properties concur, saying that the presence of milfoil in a lake can scare away potential buyers and reduce property values. Some go further, speculating that before long, the presence of milfoil will have to be revealed to potential buyers as part of the sales offer.

"We have to remember we are just one of many lake towns applying for limited State funds."

June D'Andrea

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OSSIPEE LAKE REPORT - WINTER, 2005

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