



Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

MEMO

TO: Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commissioners

FROM: Laura Jester, Administrator

DATE: January 8, 2014

RE: Compiled Responses from Stakeholders on Medicine Lake Issues

The following stakeholder groups were asked to answer four questions related to issues facing Medicine Lake: City of Medicine Lake, City of Plymouth, Association of Medicine Lake Area Citizens (AMLAC), Three Rivers Park District (TRPD), and Hennepin County.

Questions posed:

What problems exist in Medicine Lake?

Where are these problems occurring within the lake?

What use is impacted by each problem (e.g. swimming, boating, fishing, aesthetics)?

How would you rank each problem in order of importance/priority?

Responses:

City of Medicine Lake - *via email from Mayor Holter (10/16/13)*

It really is on behalf of Medicine Lake, not the City of Medicine Lake. French Park has in excess of 40,000 visitors annually most likely drawn by the allure of proximity to Medicine Lake. Medicine Lake was a key pride factor in Plymouth residents' eyes when the #1 place to live in America announcements were made. The problems that exist in Medicine Lake are excess vegetation and low lake water level. Ranking these problems by activity is near impossible; we believe all uses are equally impacted.

City of Plymouth – *staff perspective via email from Derek Asche (11/21/13)*

Existing problems in Medicine Lake include:

1. Water Quality Impairment
2. Infrastructure flooding at High Water Level
3. Potential for flooding of low laying private properties

City of Plymouth – *Excerpt from minutes of Special Meeting of the City Council (10/29/13)*

The majority of the Council stated they don't support raising the dam for recreational purposes.

AMLAC – *see attached letter (10/22/13)*

Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

7800 Golden Valley Road | Golden Valley, MN 55427 | www.bassettcreekwmo.org | Established 1968

Crystal | Golden Valley | Medicine Lake | Minneapolis | Minnetonka | New Hope | Plymouth | Robbinsdale | St. Louis Park

TRPD – from meeting (12/4/13)

TRPD staff listed the following issues, in order of priority:

1. Improve Water Quality
 - a. Lower total phosphorus concentrations
 - b. Lower bacteria at the beach (requires goose management)

2. Revisit Comprehensive Vegetation Management Plan – particularly with the goal of expanding and protecting the bulrush beds and other native plants.
3. Prevent Introduction of New AIS
4. Protect Ecological Function in Balance with Recreational Uses

Hennepin County – staff perspective via email from Randy Anhorn (1/8/14)

What problems exist in Medicine Lake?

Existing impairments (as listed on 303d), nutrients, chloride, and mercury in fish tissue.

Where are these problems occurring within the lake?

Whole lake.

What use is impacted by each problem (e.g. swimming, boating, fishing, aesthetics)?

Nutrients : Poor water quality, increased algal blooms (which in the case of B-Gs can be toxic) that impacts all that listed above

Chlorides : The accumulation and persistence of chloride poses a risk to the water quality and the plants, animals, and humans who depend upon it.

Mercury in fish tissue: Fish consumption—human health

How would you rank each problem in order of importance/priority?

I would rank all three similarly, however, we have the ability to remediate nutrient and chloride loading to the lakes (resulting in delisting) more so than fish consumption issues.

October 22, 2013

From:
AMLAC Board of Directors

To:
Laura Jester, Administrator
Bassett Creek Watershed Commission

Dear Laura,

The AMLAC Board of Directors thanks you for reaching out to us. We are always open to discussing Medicine Lake issues and optimistically pleased that the Bassett Creek Watershed Commission is open to understanding the unique circumstances that affect an urban lake.

ISSUES: We addressed your questions as a group and determined the most serious problems effecting Medicine Lake in priority order are:

- 1) Invasive species
 - a. Excessive invasive vegetation -- brings frustration in attempting to control its expansion and the higher levels of swimmers itch;
Potential actions – enlarge the zone for treating invasive vegetation; weed harvesting performed properly; include spraying for milfoil as well as curly leaf.
 - b. The potential threat of zebra mussel infestation and the imperfect boat inspection efforts to thwart infiltration;
Potential actions – close boat ramps when there are no inspectors; have DNR regularly staff Three Rivers Park boat launch; close all boat launches when no inspections are being performed; fund more inspection time.
- 2) The inconsistent water levels cause erosion, and at low levels inhibit the ability to safely use the lake. Extremely variant water levels of Medicine Lake are a problem for lake users on several fronts.

Lower lake levels decrease the desirability of the lake for beach swimming, sailing, paddle boarding and motorized water activities, as well as the lake's scenic value in the summer recreational season. As the water recedes, the shoreline also loses its aesthetic appeal as vegetation and dead fish decompose. As the lake level recedes, it becomes especially difficult for those who trailer boats for a day of enjoyment because the boat launch areas become so shallow that launching a motorized boat is difficult. Many homeowners' boats actually become

stranded atop boatlifts that are not physically capable of functioning in water so shallow.

Higher levels are also pose problems: boaters must mind the ‘no wake’ rules, shoreline erosion can occur, and some properties are in danger of flooding.

Potential action – install a movable auto-mechanical weir to control water flow over the Basset Creek Dam.

WHERE: These problems are occurring throughout the entire lake, especially the shoreline invasive vegetation and the current low water levels. Weeds affect deeper water, too: when milfoil and curlyleaf get cut by boats (or by hand), great globs of the weeds float into the deeper parts of the lake. Swimmers go to the deeper areas to avoid getting the itch. So, even though most people know not to swim in the shallows, they still run into globs of loose weeds in the deep. So, the problems caused by the excess of invasive vegetation and low lake levels are felt throughout the lake.

WHAT THEY AFFECT: Each of these problems affects the ability of people to swim, boat, fish, and negatively impacts the aesthetics for walking around the lake. More the 50,000 people visit the lake each year, putting a strain on the lake resources. Additionally, the wildlife and eco-system within and around the lake is pressured by inconsistent water levels and loss of habitat due to invasive vegetation.

Past progress has been significant, but there remains much to do. The pressures on Medicine Lake increase as the surrounding area becomes more urbanized. Park and lake use are being utilized at their maximum capacity. To continue at this level we ask your help to combat the problems we have outlined.

We welcome further dialogue and in-person discussion with you and the Bassett Creek Watershed Commission.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors
Association of Medicine Lake Area Citizens – **AMLAC**
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