

Otis Reservoir Property Owners Association (ORPOA)

Annual Meeting, June 27, 2021

Called to order: 10:04

President Mark Amanti called for a Moment of Silence for losses over the past year.

Secretary: Jane Dahle is the new Secretary. 2019 minutes read and accepted.

Treasurer's Report. A copy is attached. We now have a PayPal option for paying dues, and some new members have utilized this option. Read and accepted.

Lake: Gates closed 3/26. Ice out on 3/28. Lake filled soon after.

Zebra Mussels. No activity. Otis Reservoir is not susceptible to them.

D & J Marina project. The property is up for sale again. The 5 to 7 year project he planned on has now turned into a 10 to 15 year project. Permits are in place and are good for a year.

Website. Troy has been doing a great job. You can pay dues and make firework donations from the website. There is a slight fee to ORPOA for that payment method.

Dam: The New dam continues to work great. Testing was done over the winter. Heating elements work and they were able to raise it up and down several times to be sure it works in inclement weather. Safety switches work too.

Milfoil: There are infested areas by the D & J Ramp. Divers spread chemicals over the past two years, but they were only partially successful in killing the plants. Some plants were found by the Tolland ramp. Solitude Lake Management was hired to go in and pull plants and to set mats down to cover them and suffocate them. They were required to get a permit from ConCom. DEP and DEM are also working with Solitude Lake Management. Milfoil is undesirable, and it is important to keep it under control. A small boat with divers were seen last week. We are unsure about what they were doing; they may have been putting up buoys or doing water testing.

Phragmite: We were in a 2-3 year state funded program, but the funding has run out. There are still large patches around the lake. Otis has hired a group that have been working for the past couple weeks. We will try to get more information about who they are and what they are doing.

Tolland State Forest: The new septic for the State Campground is being used. The old dumping station was removed. They ran out of funding and did not replace it. RV's have no place to dump their refuse now. There are severe sewage odors, meaning the new septic station is failing. They changed a pump out, but it is unclear if that has fixed the problem. Bruce Wall said there was a problem by the ranger station with a holding tank that shifted over the winter

causing the pipe to disconnect and leak. This was supposedly repaired. Mark will try to get some information on this.

Water Testing: In the past we used Westfield State University for our water testing. This wasn't done last year due to Covid. We hope that this will continue now that Covid restrictions are over and the University is open again. Shannon Poulin, of LAPA West, and a resident of Otis, contacted Mark and asked if we wanted to have the Reservoir tested for cyano bacteria. Mark invited Shannon to speak at our Annual Meeting, and thanked her for coming out on a Sunday morning. She explained that LAPA West does overall water quality testing and tests for cyano bacteria in area lakes. In 2018 Stockbridge Bowl was shut down for a cyano bacteria bloom. In 2019 Pontoosuc was shut down for a weekend because a biologist assessing milfoil thought there was a bloom. When the results came back the shutdown proved unnecessary. A program was started to monitor the lakes to be sure they are not being shut down unnecessarily.

Cyano bacteria is a blue green algae. It is a photosynthetic bacteria. There are many different species of Cyano, but not all produce toxins. When there are optimal conditions, including warm temperatures, abundant sunlight, rainfall, pollution from human activities, and plentiful nutrients including nitrogen and phosphorus, a bloom will arise. The health effects are the main concern. You can have a wide spectrum of issues from skin irritation to liver problems or death.

The water testing includes doing a temperature and dissolved oxygen profile from top to bottom, including clarity. From this they determine where they want to take a sample. If there is a problem at the deep part of the lake, it will come to the surface. One milliliter of water is placed into a flurometer, which reads the pigment in the water. Otis Reservoir tested at 0.1 parts per billion, which is the lowest you can have. When the cell counts go above that, it becomes a concern because there may be toxins. The MA Department of Public Health recommends that at 50,000 cells per milliliter toxin testing is done. At 70,000 cells per milliliter, or 14 parts per billion of toxins, the lake can be shut down.

How do you deal with the issue if you have a bloom? You can put copper or peroxide algicides down. Aluminum compounds can be put down to inactivate the phosphorus. You must have a permit in advance to do these treatments. Shannon does not know of a case where an emergency permit has been issued.

Testing the phosphorus and dissolved oxygen in the entire water column is very important. If dissolved oxygen drops below two milligrams per liter, it allows the phosphorus to be released from the sediment. This, along with sunlight, feeds the cyano bacteria.

At the end of July, 2018 Lake Garfield lake looked like a dog had taken a blue noodle and shredded it. It went away in a few days. The levels were not high enough to close the lake, but it was concerning. Last year around the same time, Shannon saw little rivers of green on the surface of the water. Lake Buel also had an issue last year; it looked like a dog had shed in the water. There was cyano bacteria throughout the entire water column in the lake. LAPA had

established a protocol. Using this, Shannon tested, and identified high cell counts, and anticipated the issues.

Human waste is a major problem. **Not having a functioning pumping station at the campground is really bad!** That is one of the ways phosphorus can get into the lake, along with bad septic systems in general around the lake. The fertilizers in MA no longer have phosphorus in them. Lake Garfield knows they have a huge runoff problem, which allows sediments into the lake, causing blooms. They are looking into grants to put in catch basins.

The EPA has a monitoring program set up which is geared more towards citizen science. It is easy to use. You take a water sample and look at it under a microscope; you don't get numbers. Shannon's Fluorometer came from the EPA, and it reads the pigments in the water. Steve Hofer is very familiar with this process, and hopefully he will help with our testing going forward.

Geese control: We hired a company out of UMass that works with the state and does a relocation program. 122 Geese were removed last year. 38 have been removed so far this year. We have to renew the contract every year, and it is based on the number of times they come. They learned a lot last year. The majority of nests, which were located on Clark Island, have been removed. Elimination of the nests is the key to reduce the population. The geese are still here, but there are significantly fewer this year. Now the geese are being a more elusive. If you have large groups of geese let Mark know, or post it on Facebook, saying where they are and how many so that relocation visits can be more effective.

Airforce Beach/Tolland Road Extension: The town of Otis relinquished their use of the access road as a town road. The state put gates on both sides of the access road. The gates can be opened if there is an emergency. No parking signs have been posted by the gates and by the dam. The residents appreciate this, as there were constantly cars parked there, overnight campers and people launching boats. There was also a constant trash issue. The drawback is that this is a good viewing spot for the fireworks. We will ask that they open the gates from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. for viewing the night of the fireworks. A lot of people use the boat ramps for ice fishing in the winter. The gates will be open for the winter.

Right of Way issues: Problems have been happening for 40/50 years regarding back lot access issues at right of ways all around the Reservoir. This has been building steam for years and is a sticky situation and a grey area. The ORPOA does not want to get in the middle of issues between the state and private landowners, but this is a good forum to discuss this. Especially since there are many in the same situation. Jane Dahle was introduced. She explained that the police were called to the Brookman Drive right of way, and they stated that the bulk of their calls involve right of way issues. At a recent meeting, the ORPOA Board also stated it would be good to identify rights of way, and to encourage back lot members to join ORPOA. Jane discovered a *Department of Environmental Management Policy, Otis Reservoir, Otis, Mass.* DRAFT policy dated 10/26/2000. Jane spoke with numerous people, many of whom remembered the issue, but no one could remember the meeting ever taking place. Of the six

items listed, the ORPOA Executive Board gave Jane Dahle permission to represent them in supporting Item 5, which states:

(5) Right of Ways or Group-owned/Association Abutters:

- Associations are/will be recognized by the Department
- No private (individually-owned) piers will be permitted at these sites
- Piers (*) will be encouraged for Association members-use and will require that a pick-up/drop-off space be allotted on each

Key: (*) = permit required

We were hoping that we could get some consensus from the various members of ORPOA to recognize that rights of way are for back lot properties' use, and that individuals should not be permitted to take them. We are not trying to intrude on anybody else's individual rights, we are just trying to get a consensus that people are in agreement that they should be protected. I was hoping that we could have a motion to agree that this is a good thing, and that I can then talk to the state and say that this is for everybody, not just us. Comments were requested. Mark stated that there is a motion, that we have an agreement that people should fight for their rights. If we can all help out in some way or fashion, I think it's a good idea. Mark made a motion to accept this with ORPOA's backing. Someone asked about dock permitting, and Mark answered that is up to the State. The item was read again, and it was noted that written copies were available. The motion was unanimously passed. Jane asked that if anyone knows of the location of any right of ways, please let us know.

New Board Members: Dave Watson, Jake Connely and Nick Hiller (inducted last year), are new Board members. Kevin Donovan will be elected in next year.

Fireworks: July 10th, with a rain date of July 17th. It would have been our 20th year, but because we didn't have fireworks last year, it's our 19th year. We have received extremely generous contributions, so the fireworks fund is more than adequate. The show will be larger this year and next year because of the funding. Thanks to everyone for their contributions! (applause) Obtaining the fireworks is more difficult because of Covid. The show will last 20 to 25 minutes, because that's the ideal length. We have been able to get higher quality fireworks for this year's show, and will have some money left for next year. Help is needed for cleanup on Sunday morning at 7:30. Please bring a 5-gallon bucket and a rake. Let's all hope for a great night so we can enjoy the show.

Monster Wakes: Please keep boat traffic away from the shoreline. While it is great to watch wake boarding and wake surfing, the large wakes create havoc and are destroying the shoreline. Please stay in the middle of the lake or away from the residential areas. Be conscious of your wake. You are responsible for damage!

Adjourned at 11:06 a.m.