

November 18, 2012

Lake 'healthy,' says DNR; residents disagree

Elaine Blaisdell[Cumberland Times-News](#)

OAKLAND — John Griffin, secretary of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, said again this year that Deep Creek Lake is in good shape during the second annual State of the Lake address on Thursday in Oakland.

“From our monitoring, the lake continues to be a healthy reservoir meeting Federal Clean Water Act standards,” said Griffin.

However, residents disagreed with Griffin’s assessment on the health of the lake.

“The core message that I think I heard from the DNR and MDE (Maryland Department of the Environment) today is that the lake is basically fine,” said resident Brian Greenberg. “My core message back to you is that summary conclusion differs so sharply for the experience of my family — and essentially all the families we know on the lake — as to perhaps be from another planet.”

Lake users claim that the invasive aquatic plant known as Eurasian water milfoil has made it impossible to swim in the lake.

“Now it’s impossible to swim in the waters off my dock after mid-July because of the extreme amount of vegetation, the awful smell of rotting vegetation and goose crap,” said LaVale resident Richard Matlick, who has property on the lake. “Then in August it turns to mud.”

A survey of the plant in the entire lake area was completed this summer and it was determined that the plant was found in 86 acres, or a little over 2 percent of the lake’s surface, according to Griffin.

“We are committed to going out and doing that survey again,” said Bruce Michael, DNR’s director of resource assessment, who added that a second assessment of EWM will be completed in June.

The highest-density portions of EWM are on the southeastern end of the lake, according to Michael. The study indicated that the level of EWM in shallower coves is almost 6 percent, according to Griffin. There was no significant EWM increase between 2010, 2011 and 2012, according to the data.

“That’s a good sign that it’s not overwhelming, taking over and pushing out the other species,” said Michael. “You look at the surface, you see other species.”

The DNR plans to do pilot projects this summer, one which will use herbicide on EWM and monitor the effects to make sure there are no detrimental impacts.

“The most effective lowest impact on a large-scale area would be using the herbicide 2,4-D,” said Michael. “Potentially, this is something that would need repeated applications. You have to remember there is no one silver bullet for eradicating Eurasian water milfoil. It’s in Deep Creek Lake and it’s going to stay in there unless we were to wipe out everything in the lake, kill all the underwater grasses and all the fish as well.”

Not all residents at the meeting agreed that 2,4-D is a good plan for eradicating EWM.

“Putting 2,4-D into the lake is a lousy idea. If you think it’s a good idea to put this herbicide in the water, I suggest that you communicate to the county/state tourism bureau that people can come to the lake and their grandkids can marinate in 2,4-D during their vacations at the lake,” said Greenberg.

The cost for the application of 2,4-D is about \$500 to \$1,000 per acre and it could be used in a targeted area, according to Michael.

“2,4-D has very low toxicity to most fish. There are obviously concerns about putting any chemical in the water, but this

has the most benign effect on anything that we can find,” said Michael. “Every control measure has a negative impact as well as positive impact on helping to reduce Eurasian water milfoil.”

Another control measure for EWM is mechanical harvesting, which would involve mowing it in limited areas. The cost of the harvesting would range from \$8,000 to \$10,000 just for a couple of days, according to Michael. The DNR hasn’t found a way yet to fund the harvesting of the EWM, said Griffin.

The Friends of Deep Creek Lake is circulating a petition with more than 1,000 signatures asking the state to provide funds for the preservation of the lake and surrounding watershed, according to resident Ralph Schmidt.

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DNR: Sediment not ‘much of an issue’

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OAKLAND — The Maryland Department of Natural Resources doesn’t have the final report on Phase I and II of the Deep Creek Lake Sediment Study, but will likely have it completed by early February, Secretary John Griffin told attendees at Thursday’s State of the Lake address.

All the field work for the Phase II sediment plan has been completed, according to Bruce Michael, DNR’s director of resource assessment.

“From our work to date, it’s pretty clear that sediment buildup is most evident in five or six coves at the southern end of the lake. Otherwise, there isn’t much of an issue,” said Griffin.

Resident Howard Jonsky, however, disagreed with Griffin.

“Mr. Secretary, we talked about dredging and in Pond Run Cove I think it’s excavating,” said Jonsky. “There is no water in Pond Run Cove; you need to clarify that in your studies. We need to make sure in September that we have enough water in the lake to float the boats in Pond Run Cove.”

The sediment in about five coves is 20-plus inches, according to Michael.

The last phase of the sediment study, which will be completed in July, will deal with dredging issues in the coves most impacted by sediment buildups, cost alternatives and ways of disposing of it, Griffin said.

“We did Phase II as a combination of funds from our department with thanks to county government and the property owners association as well,” said Griffin.

The cost estimate for Phase II is \$180,000, with \$65,000 to be funded by the DNR, \$95,000 to be funded by the county and \$20,000 contributed by the association.

Sedimentation is a natural process whereby soil is deposited through erosion into a body of water.

There were no toxins or contaminants found in the 42 cores of sediment that were collected in the lake, according to Michael.

The lack of toxins and contaminants will make it easier to dredge, said Michael. The DNR decided to send out a subset of the cores to be carbon-dated in order to determine when the greatest amount of sediment came in.

“You are looking at basically 87 years of sedimentation,” said Michael.

The sediment can't be dredged until a determination is made on how it got into the lake, according to Michael.

"One of the contractors will look at a sediment reduction plan and share that information with local governments and the state. They will also determine an alternative, should they decide dredging (would) be an option ... what are the impacts," said Michael, who added that, during dredging, no boating activities would be allowed.

Griffin and resident Brian Greenberg both said that the watershed management is key to effective lake management

"We need to start thinking more about the watershed as a whole, because if we don't, the maintenance of Deep Creek Lake as a recreational economic asset not only to the county but the state depends upon the ecological balance of the lake itself," said Griffin. "We want to maintain a healthy lake that attracts people to come recreate in a variety of ways and if we don't look ahead, recreation use will be impaired and economic values will drop."

The DNR has been speaking with the county commissioners on how to develop a long-term watershed management plan, according to Griffin.

"We wholeheartedly agree and commend you on this decision," said Greenberg to Griffin. "It's important and noteworthy that initial baby steps are being taken in the direction of discussions of watershed management. But, Deep Creek Lake lacks

a watershed management approach; instead, we have a fragmented, incomplete and ineffective lake management system. Referencing the ideal of a watershed management system doesn't change our realities here."

Greenberg suggested that the key to a watershed management approach is for DNR and commissioners to engage citizens and local stakeholders in a discussion about all the lake's issues.

Some residents indicated they were appreciative of the progress that DNR has made so far, but they want to see something happen sooner.

"I want to compliment the state agencies that are involved in identifying the cause of the problems that we are seeing at Deep Creek Lake. The bad news is that it might be 90 years too late," said Scott Johnson. "The good news is something is being done about it and I applaud Secretary Griffin for his efforts. Let's keep up the good work."

"I do appreciate you coming here; I think you are getting on top of it but I don't think you are quick enough," said resident Barbara Stork. "We all know that this didn't happen overnight."