

## **DNR Secretary Griffin Holds Second Annual State-Of-Deep Creek Lk. Event**Nov. 15, 2012

Secretary John Griffin and other Maryland Department of Natural Resources officials held their second annual state-of-Deep Creek Lake meeting on Wednesday afternoon at St. Peter's Catholic Church parish hall in Oakland. More than 100 people attended the 2½-hour event, in which many property owners gave impassioned pleas for Griffin to "save our lake."

As during last year's meeting, however, Griffin indicated that, overall, Deep Creek Lake is in good shape.

"The lake continues to be a healthy reservoir, meeting federal Clean Water Act standards," the secretary said.

He and other state officials pointed to the results of their Deep Creek Lake monitoring program that they started in 2009 and preliminary results of the Phase II sediment study, which was paid for through DNR, Garrett County, and DCL Property Owners Association funds.

Griffin indicated that Phase II fieldwork has been completed and results will be available in January and May, with the final report available in July.

"We'll be looking at the whole watershed and sources of sediment and the ways that individuals, governments, and groups of individuals can help to arrest sediment and nutrient flows into the lake," the secretary said.

He noted that sediment buildup is most evident in five or six coves in the southern end of the lake.

"By July 2013, DNR will have a cost estimate for dredging channels in coves," Griffin said.

He stressed several times, however, that coming up with the funds to cover the cost will be difficult given the current economic climate.

Director Bruce Michael, DNR resource assessment, reported that a shoreline study conducted in July found the invasive Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) co-existing with other aquatic vegetation in 86 acres of the lake. He noted EWM was on 2.3 percent of the lake surface and in 5.8 percent of shallow water areas (less than 6 meters).

DNR plans to use the herbicide 2,4-D in a pilot project at the lake and monitor its effectiveness in eradicating EWM. Michael noted the herbicide costs \$500 to \$1,000 per acre and must be applied over a four-year period.

"It has very low toxicity to most fish," he said.

Michael indicated that DNR has thoroughly researched 2,4-D and found it to have the most "benign effect" on other species.

He noted that the DNR has rejected the idea of using the milfoil weevil as a natural means of controlling EWM, as it not a native species of Maryland and has not been approved by the Invasive Matrix Team for introduction in the state. The director added that the use of weevils is "very expensive," \$1,000 per acre.

The DNR will also look at the effectiveness of mechanical harvesting in eradicating EWM in a small scale, two-day pilot project in limited areas of the lake. Michael noted that mechanical harvesting is "very expensive," and that the project alone will cost between \$8,000 and \$10,000.

He said Phase II sediment core samples do not have any toxic materials, which is good. If dredging takes place, it will be make sediment disposal a much easier process, he indicated.

Michael also reported that DNR stocked the lake with 10,000 large mouth bass fingerlings this past spring to help replenish a natural fish kill that occurred 2010. He said the large mouth bass population is now "good," and the small mouth bass and perch populations are "excellent."

Maryland Department of the Environment division chief John Grace, Water Management Administration, reported on lake water levels, which are affected by climate and water inflow and outflow.

"This year was a pretty challenging year with regard to water levels," he said.

Over a 40-year period, the lake was at its lowest level in 1999. It is currently at the eighth lowest level. Grace said Brookfield Renewable Power made at least two drawdowns this year, one for repairs and one in anticipation of hurricane weather. Griffin noted that recent increases in water temperature and low precipitation resulted in low levels this past summer, especially in some coves.

Howard Janoske, Penn Point Road, said there is no water at all in his cove. He indicated DNR would need a bulldozer to "dredge" that area.

With regard to Griffin's statement about the lack of funding, Deep Creek Drive resident Chuck Hoffeditz pointed out that New Germany State Park Lake was recently dredged.

"Did that money come from the state?" he asked.

Griffin nodded, indicating, "yes."

Ralph Schmidt pointed out that Ocean City receives funding from the state for beach restoration. Others noted that state taxpayers are also paying for Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts.

Full-time lake resident Max Peterson said there were no noxious weeds at his dock in 2005, but now there are. He asked DNR to re-examine the use of milfoil weevils, noting that other states have used them to eradicate EWM.

"It seems like a relatively easy fix to the problem," Peterson said.

Richard Matlick, Green Glade Cove, said it is impossible to swim off his dock after mid July because of the extreme amount of vegetation, the awful smell of rotting vegetation, and goose "crap." For the last several years, Matlick has had to pull his dock and boats out in August because of low water levels, he said.

Brian Greenberg indicated DNR's core message that the lake is basically fine is greatly different from his and others' opinions.

"That summary conclusion differs so sharply from the experience of my family and essentially all of the families we know on the lake as to, perhaps, being from another planet," Greenberg said.

He indicated that public and private interests are being threatened with the declining health of the lake.

"Putting 2,4-D into the lake is lousy idea," Greenberg added. "And if you think it's a good idea to put this herbicide into the water, I suggest that you communicate to the county [chamber of commerce] and state tourism bureau that . . . kids and grandkids could come and *marinate* in 2,4-D during their vacations at the lake."

Scott Johnson, State Park Road, complimented the state agencies involved in identifying the problems at Deep Creek Lake.

"The bad news is, it might be 90 years too late," he said. "The good news is, something is being done about it, and I applaud Secretary Griffin for his efforts. We need to continue to pay

attention to it. I think when cooler heads prevail and approach this in a level-headed way, we'll get the job done."

Griffin said everyone is entitled to their own opinions but not to their own facts.

"We're trying our best to work through these issues," he said. "I think we have had much improved conservations with this board of county commissioners, and more things are going to start happening as we move forward."

Chair Jim Raley, Board of Garrett County Commissioners, indicated the commissioners are committed to trying to improve water quality and the Deep Creek Lake watershed.