

Lake Gaston Stakeholders Minutes (Unapproved)

December 15, 2005

Chairman Pete Deschenes called the meeting to order at 9:10 am. at the ANPC Building.

Members and visitors were asked to introduce themselves. There were 30 Stakeholders and visitors present (see list of attendees attached).

The minutes of the September 22, 2005 meeting were unanimously approved as submitted by Secretary Larry Jolly.

Prior to this meeting, Pete Deschenes, Boyd Strain and Larry Jolly met and asked the science team to meet and clarify some issues in the Management Plan.

Governance Plan

Larry Jolly reported the Governance Plan approved at the September 22, 2005 meeting requires official action be approved by a two-thirds majority of those voting members present. He distributed the Governance Plan signature page that requires the Stakeholder organization's authorized person's signature approving the plan and committing to adhere to the plan. Those authorized were asked to sign. Those not authorized to sign, were asked to take it to the person so authorized and return it to Larry as soon as possible.

Communications Plan

Chairman Pete Deschenes discussed the Communications Plan in the absence of Communications Plan Chairman Doug Hughes, who was unable to attend. Pete referred to page 17 of the plan and spoke about the timing of the public forums to be held. It is planned to have a forum in each of Lake Gaston's four quadrants. They are to be held in February and March with the locations yet to be determined. Harrell Johnson of the RR Basin Assn. asked about the boundaries. Pete said a person could attend any one of the meetings regardless of their residence. The time of day and the length of the meetings are yet to be determined. A member of the Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries said they usually have their meetings on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday evenings from 7-9. They have found these days and times were best suited for the interested parties. Elton Brown suggested having one meeting on a Saturday to accommodate part-time residents. The group will need members and volunteers to help out at the forums in order for them to be successful. The group will need the cooperation of North Carolina, Virginia, BASS, and US Army Corps. of Engineers as well. Early public notification and advertising is critical to the success of the forums. The Lake Gaston Association has been successful in notifying the public in regard to the forums it has held. Any group participating in the forums must be up to speed on the issues discussed at the meetings and each group needs to have a representative present at the forum. It was suggested the panel consist of four experts in their field at each forum and that as many stakeholders be present at each forum as possible.

It is suggested that when the Chairman of the Communications Committee responds to a letter or an article in the media, it should be done in a careful and factual manner. The LGSB Chairman should review responses prior to submission to the media. Judge Manning said the response should be in all the media, not just one. Elton Brown thought it might be possible for the Communications group and Chairman Deschenes to read any critical article or letter published prior to it being printed. Concern was expressed about a conflict of interest in such a situation. Boyd feels both sides of an issue need to be given, not just one side. An editor is not required to print all articles submitted. The Stakeholders group approves a media response to an article or editorial if the response is approved by the Communications Chair and the LGSB Chairman.

The Technical Advisory Group left the general meeting at this point and met in a separate room to work out some issues to be brought before the general meeting later. The remaining parties reviewed the funding plan and options.

A 10-minute break took place at this point.

Funding Plan

The proposed funding plan dated November 8, 2005, was presented to the group for consideration. The Stakeholders and the Lake Gaston Weed Control Council had worked together to come up with the funding plan. Judge Manning spoke about the five county meeting in Littleton and reminded the group that each county had agreed to fully fund the \$116,000 per county per year to help fund the necessary cost for noxious weed control in Lake Gaston. He feels a portion of that amount in Halifax County should come from general revenues and the balance from the Special Service Tax District (SSTD). The Virginia counties would fund it from general revenues. Warren and Northampton would probably fund from general revenues.

Virginia needs to come to the table with more money dedicated to noxious weed control. Elton Brown suggested writing a letter to the new governor in Richmond impressing upon him the critical need for more money. Pete feels it would be better to have face-to-face meetings with the powers to be in Richmond to plead our case rather than write letters. Virginia Beach, Dominion, and BASS need to exert their considerable influence in this matter on behalf of Lake Gaston. Joan Blankenship with Va. Bass Federation said she would be willing to help. Pete Deschenes suggested putting together a Funding Team of Becky Mitchell, Harry Miller, Pete Deschenes, and Elton Brown. Pete will talk to Chris Horton about a person from BASS to serve on the Funding Team. Almira Papierniak of the Lake Gaston Chamber of Commerce asked about private funding. According to John Slaton the Lake Gaston Weed Control Council has sought such funding in the past with little or no success, but the effort should continue.

Amounts hoped for 2006 treatment of noxious weeds in Lake Gaston:

5 X 116,000	\$580,000
US Army COE	\$100,000
Dominion Power	\$0
Virginia	\$100,000
North Carolina	\$200,000
Virginia Beach	\$230,000
Total (Hoped For)	\$1,210,000

Harry Miller of Dominion spoke about his initial problem in seeking more money for groups like the Stakeholders. They are raising their shoreline management fees, which should produce a significant amount of money to cover their increasing costs and maybe have some money left over for community support projects.

Jim Thornton of Dominion spoke about the increased costs necessary because of the new relicensing agreement. He feels restoration of native aquatic weeds is a topic more of interest to them rather than the control of noxious weeds.

Pete Deschenes introduced Lucy Allen to the group. She is a NC representative in Raleigh. She assured the group she will fight to keep the money in the NC budget for noxious weed control. She spoke briefly and asked for names to be given to the governor for the Bi-State Roanoke River Basin membership.
(Pete Deschenes has emailed Lucy Allen with the names requested.)

Pete Deschenes urged all Virginia Lake Gaston Association members to contact their representatives in Richmond urging them to appropriate more money for noxious weed control in Lake Gaston. Becky from Virginia Beach assured the group that the money from Virginia Beach for noxious weed control was in their budget and would not be removed.

Technical Advisory Group

Boyd Strain gave a brief report from the Technical Advisory Group. They discussed grass carp and said North Carolina and Virginia Wildlife personnel would only agree to having 10 grass carp per infested acre. The Stakeholders group goal is to manage and maintain an ecologically acceptable river system. The proposal will be submitted to Virginia and North Carolina and they hope to have a final report in February. Boyd feels private funds will be needed to treat private property in 2006. Judge Manning asked if the funds would be used to treat noxious weeds and not just hydrilla- the consensus was noxious weeds.

The group reconvened at 12:20 following a lunch break, and introduced Bob Gunkel from the Corps of Engineers.

Chairman Deschenes suggested the group approve the following items this afternoon---the Funding Plan and the Management Plan.

Funding Plan

The proposed funding plan was further discussed. An earnest attempt will be made to close the funding gap. Any grant monies received would go to funding treatment of private property. On a vote by raised hands to approve the Funding Plan those in favor were 12 and opposed 0. Virginia Wildlife, North Carolina Wildlife and Dominion Power abstained.

The Technical Advisory Group was asked again about the treatment of hydrilla or noxious weeds. Judge Manning again said he prefers noxious weeds to hydrilla. Skip from ANPC said he has no problem with the term. The Lake Gaston Weed Control Council uses the term noxious weeds, not hydrilla. The cost for treatment in 2005 for private treatment was approximately \$600,000. It is estimated the cost for 2006 will be about the same.

The LGWCC can only spend public monies for noxious weed control, not private money. The cost to treat private property will have to be paid by the property owners.

Skip Wiegiersma from ANPC estimated it would cost about the same in 2006 to treat public boat ramps, dry hydrants, critical navigational channels, & public swimming areas. These total about 20 acres. John Slaton said he would meet with Skip to come up with more accurate cost estimates.

Skip Wiegiersma stated he has a problem with noxious weeds being replaced by coontail and still considered a vegetated acre. Considerable discussion followed. Dominion Power has to apply for a permit for the release of a specific number of grass carp per vegetated acre. It is estimated that private parties have introduced approximately 1,000 grass carp into the lake. VA and NC have agreed to 10 grass carp per infested acre. There is no way it can be ascertained with absolute accuracy how many grass carp there are per acre in Lake Gaston. Using accepted numbers for yearly attrition, it is estimated there are 24,000 grass carp in Lake Gaston. Therefore it is expected there will be an additional 6,000 in 2006. The Corps of Engineers is expected to give some money to NC State and VA Tech to conduct a study of the number of grass carp in the lake.

The Lake Gaston Weed Control Council wants to conduct educational programs about noxious weeds in Lake Gaston for an estimated cost of \$25,000. Jim Thornton said perhaps Dominion could help with signs at marinas and boat ramps urging boaters to keep their boats free of vegetation prior to launching and after recovery.

John Slaton forgot to mention there was \$20,000 in the budget for biocontrol agents and floating mats. If LGWCC gets any money from the USACOE, it will be used for insect research, nothing else.

The budget balance of \$650,000 will go to treat critical designated areas and \$445,000 goes for herbicide treatment.

The budget was approved pending any TAG meeting changes in January or early February. The vote by raised hands was 13 in favor and 0 opposed.

Pete Deschenes said there is an attempt being made to put together a list of all property owner associations and to invite them to a meeting.

The size of the Stakeholders group was discussed briefly and most felt it was big enough. Judge Manning said our meetings are open to the public and anyone can attend, ask questions, and provide input. It was stated by a visitor the private property owners are the ones who pay the taxes and they should be made to feel welcome and to seek information.

Jim Thornton said the Stakeholders group does not spend any money; it only makes recommendations to the LGWCC, who actually spends the money.

Pete Deschenes said information sharing and communications is absolutely essential to the success of this group.

Skip Wieggersma spoke about the survey taken of hydrilla growth in the lake. In recent years growth has taken place in the fall. He is glad native aquatic plants are returning in some of the lake areas. He feels we need to use both herbicides and grass carp.

Pete Deschenes said the LGSB accomplished a lot today. During 2006, the group would probably meet twice--a meeting following the public forums--maybe early April and the fall meeting after the TAG group meets. How much public money would be available is a question. It is hoped to have the public forums completed by the end March.

Larry Jolly explained the LGA alert system and how it works as a telephone tree. The LGA is attempting to contact all Home Owners Association presidents and get their phone numbers and email addresses.

Voting members of the group need to know meeting dates well in advance, so if there is a conflict arrangements can be made for a substitute to attend.

Jim Thornton of Dominion said the company is raising its fees to enforce the relicensing agreement. The company feels a clear and specific plan needs to be in place for Lake Gaston. Dominion is committed to maintaining the high level of lake quality. They need an end product and overall steps to make the plan workable. Dominion needs to sell its management on the plan. It must be ecologically well-spent money.

Larry Jolly commented about continuing to use ANPC as a meeting place. If anyone had an alternative suggestion, it must be convenient and be able to accommodate 35 to 40 persons.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:20 pm.

Submitted by the Recording Secretary, Tom Winebrenner

Approved by the LGSB Secretary, Larry Jolly

ACTION ITEMS:

1. NAMES FOR LUCY ALLEN FOR THE BI-STATE RIVER GROUP; (already sent)

2: TAG GROUP GET TOGETHER WITH JIM THORNTON TO DISCUSS A PLAN FOR THE LAKE;

3. ADD GRANTS AS A POSSIBLE GAP CLOSURE TO THE FUNDING PLAN ;

4. CONVENE FUNDING TEAM;

5. UPDATE LGSB MANAGEMENT PLAN WITH ALL OF THE CHANGES DISCUSSED DURING THE MEETING WITH A FOLLOW-UP TAG TEAM MEETING IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY 2006.

6. THE MANAGEMENT PLAN NEEDS TO INCLUDE A VISION OF THE LAKE AFTER LGSB WORK IS COMPLETED.

Attendees at Lake Gaston Stakeholders Meeting, December 15, 2005

VOTING MEMBERS

Pete Deschenes	Friends of the Flotilla 93
Larry Jolly	LGA
Jim Howell	Lake Gaston Stripers Club
John Slaton	Northampton County (alternate)
Wayne Jenkins	Northampton County
Vic DiCenzo	Va. Dept. Game & Inland Fisheries
Elton Brown	Lake Gaston Weed Control Council
Jim Thornton	Dominion Power
John Church	Warren County (alternate)
Almira Papierniak	Lake Gaston C of C
Harrell Johnson	Roanoke River Basin Assn.
Beth Smith	Board of Realtors
Rives Manning	Halifax County Commissioners
Joan Blankenship	Va. BASS Federation
Ulysses Ross	Warren County Commissioners
Boyd Strain	Lake Gaston Water Safety Council (alternate)
Becky Mitchell	City of Virginia Beach
Kirk Rundle	N C Wildlife Resources (alternate)

NON -VOTING ATTENDEES

Bruce Johnson	Pine View Subdivision
Joe Snow	USACOE
Bob Etheridge	LGA (alternate)
Joe Peterson	Dominion Power
Bob Lohr	Lake Gaston Colony Club Assn.
Susan Shaw-Snow	Lake Gaston Gazette
Lucy Allen	N C General Assembly Representative
Bob Gunkel	USACOE R & D Center
Christian Waters	N C Wildlife Resources Comm.
Skip Wiegiersma	ANPC
Maira Underwood	LGA Executive Director
Harry Miller	Dominion