

GARDNER LAKE AUTHORITY

270 Hartford Road
Salem, CT 06240

Meeting Minutes of August 15, 2024
Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company, Salem

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Attendees

Bozrah: Henry Granger, Justin LaPre, Don LaPre
Montville: Bill Wrobel, Scott Soderberg, Mike Magliano
Salem: Chris Rios, Tony Lasaracina

Recording Secretary: Kate Johnson

Guests: Greg Bugbee, CT Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES); Rep. Kevin Ryan, Montville Mayor Len Bunnell, Salem First Selectman Ed Chmielewski, Barbara Magliano, Sue Coffee, John Hummel, Len Johnson, Richard Caravello, Katrina Zickwolf, Karin Marquis, Val Hornat, Pat Lynch, Dave Lynch, Kathy Allen, Ron Labonte, Steve Rumod, Ross Johnson, Jane Coffey.

A quorum was noted.

Hydrilla Presentation: Greg Bugbee, CAES, Office of Aquatic Invasive Species

Greg spoke about hydrilla, presenting a Power Point presentation, where it was first found in Connecticut in the CT River. Funding was pursued to study an approximately 100-mile stretch of the river, with great concern for the river system. Last year hydrilla was found for the first time in a CT lake. To date there are now eight waterbodies with confirmed hydrilla in CT. There is consistent hydrilla presence around boat launch areas at these waterbodies. This raises concerns about state-sponsored fishing tournaments traveling from waterbody to waterbody and spreading hydrilla.

Presently there are two strains in CT. Monecious hydrilla has been identified in Coventry Lake and one other waterbody in southwestern CT. This strain is less robust, spreads through tubers and has less turions (wintering buds that detach and remain dormant at the bottom of the water through the winter). The CT River strain, which has been confirmed in Gardner Lake through DNA testing, is very robust, does not have tubers and spreads by producing abundant turions.

CAES has partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACE). Federal legislators have gotten on board and secured funding for ACE, which is mainly using funding for herbicides. Through dye testing, it was found that hydrilla has moved in unpredictable ways in the CT River. Herbicides have been used in the river at five locations and has shown good response. A winter drawdown of Gardner is on the table and herbicides will likely become necessary. At the southern end of Gardner hydrilla has been identified as far out as 11 feet and might require spot treatment, and has been found in other areas around the lake.

Questions and concerns raised were:

- Herbicide costs can range from approx. \$1,000/acre.
- Is the State educating tournament boaters?
- Efficacy of boat wash stations at boat launches (utilizing solar power).
- Boaters are causing the problems, but the resident towns are left paying.

Through their funding, ACE is trying new herbicides in some lakes at no cost. Greg will forward ACE contacts to Henry. Sterile grass carp has been used to control hydrilla in Candlewood Lake. The down side is that the carp eat all aquatic plants in their sights...the natives and the invasives!

Gardner's options to consider include:

- Having our legislators talk to DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes about hydrilla in Gardner Lake.
- Researching funding through the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) grant program. [The Eastern CT Conservation District in partnership with the CT River Coastal Conservation District has applied for AIS funding in two prior years to do outreach on nutrients going into Gardner. Both applications were unsuccessful.] The AIS grant program is funded through motor vehicle registrations.
- CAES has received some funding to do a study of all 94 state boat launches throughout CT checking for the presence of hydrilla. During these inspections, CAES will check water chemistry to see if there are any consistent changes to water chemistry, i.e. pH levels, etc.
- Federal funding used for the installation of state boat launches inhibits closing of launches.
- Chief town officials Ed Chmielewski and Len Bunnell spoke of unity of effort and drawdowns.

Minutes

Minutes of the July 18, 2024 meeting were presented. Chris Rios noted one item regarding savings interest (30 cents) reported in July, which was included in the statement presented in August. Chris Rios made a motion to approve the minutes as noted; seconded by Bill Wrobel. The motion passed unanimously.

Administration, Communication and Correspondence

- **Second GLA Drawdown Request:** Henry has submitted his second drawdown request to the State's Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDDB), necessary because of the 2006 reporting of two state protected plants at Gardner Lake, Quill-leaved arrowhead, *Sagittaria teres*, and Vasey's pondweed, *Potamogeton vaseyi*.
- **Letters of Dissatisfaction:** Letters concerning dissatisfaction with State responses to issues at Gardner Lake should be sent to Tony.
- **DEEP Invoices and Drawdown Info:** The 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 drawdown invoices from DEEP, in the amounts of \$2,774.64 and \$1,339.46 respectively, will be forwarded to the three chief town officials for their review and response by September 1. If the selectmen and mayor are in agreement, Mike Magliano made a motion to approve payment of the two invoices; seconded by Scott Soderberg. The motion passed unanimously. It was noted that DEEP will not consider this year's drawdown until the invoices are paid in full. It is hoped that our town leaders may have better success dealing with DEEP officials, especially with the newly identified presence of hydrilla.
- **The Day Article:** On Sunday, August 1, 2024, The Day ran a front page article about the presence of hydrilla discovered in Gardner Lake on July 15.
- **GZA Invoice:** Scott presented a GZA invoice in the amount of \$8,160.00 representing 75% of work performed under the current contract. Bill Wrobel made a motion to approve payment; seconded by Justin LaPre. The motion passed unanimously.
- **Teams Webinar:** Henry reported on a follow-up webinar from the meeting held at the state park on the 4th of July which was attended by state officials, enforcement, town leaders, legislators, *Friends of Gardner Lake* and GLA members. The webinar was coordinated by Representative Holly Cheeseman. At that time the presence of hydrilla had not yet been discovered. There was no discussion of drawdowns, but did include fencing between the park and residents on the southeasterly side of the beach. The location of porta pottys will be adjusted. DEEP recommended that Gardner Lake considers hiring or developing their own patrols.
- **Montville Patrol:** Montville Mayor Len Bunnell confirmed that the boat rental for this season has been removed, and GLA will not be billed for rental of the patrol boat. Mayor Bunnell noted that a Gardner Lake patrol boat would supplement the hired patrol boat. GLA will be receiving a 2024 patrol report in the near future. Members agreed that the 4-hour Montville patrols have improved behaviors on the lake.

Committee Business

- **Law Enforcement Patrol:** (See Montville Patrol above.)
- **Water Quality Sampling:** Scott noted that readings were typical for this time of year. However, transparency has been lower than normal.
- **Dam/Drawdown Updates:** (See Communications above.)

Treasurer's Report

Chris Rios presented the Treasurer's Report. 7 members voted in favor, 1 member opposed (D. LaPre); noting Robert's Rules of Order. The motion passed. *[As noted in the approval of the Minutes, Chris Rios noted one item regarding savings interest (30 cents) reported in July, which was included in the statement presented in August.]* Payment approval of a CESE invoice for water quality lab analysis was tabled.

Old Business - Invoices will be sent to the towns for their 2024 payments.

New Business - None.

Other Business - None.

Public Comment

Kate Johnson noted letters that have been sent to Chuck Lee, CT DEEP, and US Senator Richard Blumenthal regarding hydrilla at Gardner Lake.

Sue Coffee inquired about starting a petition for DEEP to close the boat launch to prevent further spread of hydrilla.

Jane Coffey spoke of behaviors at the state park and boat launch.

Representative Kevin Ryan offered his continued support in Hartford.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 19, 2024 at the Bozrah Senior Center beginning at 7:00 pm.

Adjournment

Chris Rios made a motion to adjourn at 9:16 p.m.; seconded by Mike Magliano. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Kate Johnson,
Recording Secretary