



OSS�PEE LAKE REPORT

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TURNING POINT FOR STATE NATURAL AREA



Lake and environmental organizations are pressing the state for a restoration and protection plan for Ossipee Lake Natural Area, which boaters have turned into a beach.

Alliance Photo

OSS�PEE — Whether the state's largest property on Ossipee Lake remains intact as a Natural Area or is subdivided for recreation will be determined in the coming months as environmental and lake organizations begin seeking permanent protection for the property known as Long Sands.

In September, Ossipee Lake Alliance called on the state agency DRED to suspend its negotiations to lease part of the preserve to the town of Ossipee for a beach, calling the plan unjustified and "not in the best interests of the lake or the people of the state."

Other organizations that have contacted the state on the issue include the Freedom Board of Selectmen, Effingham Conservation Commission, and Green Mountain Conservation Group.

The opposition comes nearly a year after DRED Commissioner Sean O'Kane told Ossipee officials he was willing to consider leasing part of the 400-acre preserve to the town. O'Kane's position caught environmental and lake organizations by surprise since DRED had just a few years earlier studied and rejected a similar proposal by the town, calling the site "not appropriate" for recreation.

In a letter to Ossipee officials in November, 1999 the agency pointed to the Natural Area's fragile environment of wetlands and unique plants and concluded "It is clear we have one of New Hampshire's most significant sandy pondshore ecosystems. It must be protected."

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OSS�PEE LAKE, BROAD BAY, LEAVITT
BAY, BERRY BAY, AND DANFORTH POND

David Smith, Executive Director
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KAMPS FIND CAMP THEY WERE LOOKING FOR ON BERRY BAY

FREEDOM — Rick Kamp saw a lot of New Hampshire when he was young, thanks to his father's tradition of picking a different lake each summer for the family vacation. While he can't remember all of the lakes he visited, the Springfield, Massachusetts native can recall most of the cottages he stayed in.

Small wonder that those cottages were on his mind when he and his wife, Linda,

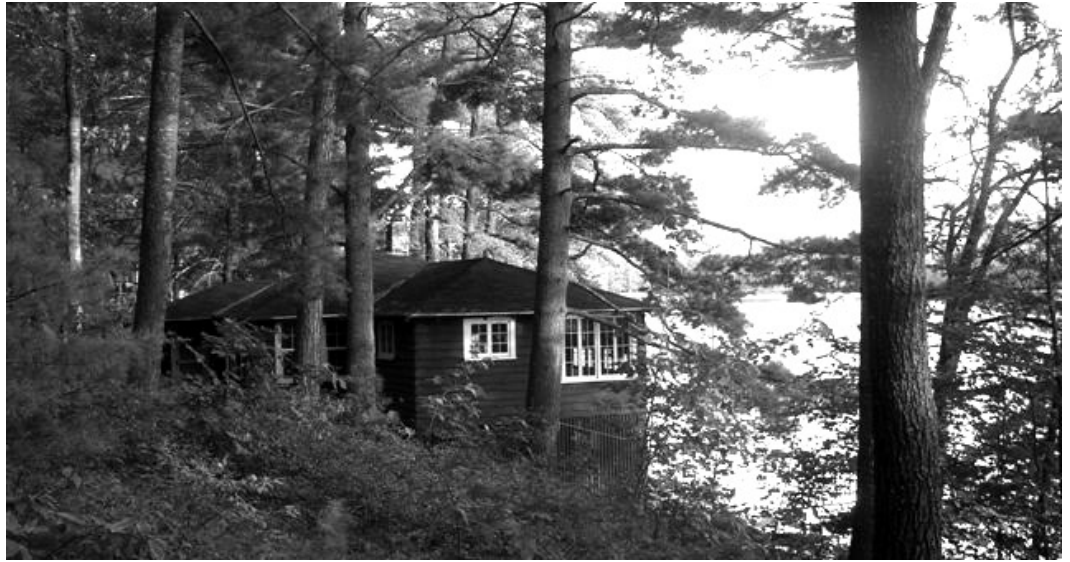
began searching last year for a place they could use as a weekend getaway from their busy lives in Concord.

It could be on any lake in the state, they told their real estate agent, as long as the house was a classic New Hampshire camp.

Agents say they are seeing more people like the Kamps after a long period in which buyers focused on finding the right piece of

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KAMPS LIKE THEIR BERRY BAY CAMP JUST AS IT IS



Just Right: For Rick and Linda Kamp, this trim cottage right on the water on Berry Bay was exactly what they were looking for, no major changes required. *Alliance Photo*

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shoreline with the idea of tearing down whatever was there to build a year-round home.

With often elaborate new houses replacing traditional camps, the landscapes of some of the state's largest lakes, like Winnepesaukee and Winnisquam, have changed dramatically. Ossipee Lake has been affected as well.

Good Timing

As luck would have it, the Kamps' interest in finding a classic camp coincided with the availability of a property that had just missed being demolished.

Rick found it on the Internet. It was on Berry Bay and the house - a trim brown-shingled cottage set on a wooded lot sloping down to the water - looked familiar. In fact, it was a cottage 300 yards from where he had stayed on a family vacation in 1958 when he was nine. The next morning the Kamps were in their car on their way to Freedom.

Built in 1940, the cottage they saw was owned by the Lewis family for many years but had been sold to a couple who had visions of building a large triple-level house requiring an array of special exceptions to Freedom's zoning ordinance.

At about the same time, the town was preparing to review the regulations that restrict changes to non-conforming properties, like the Lewis camp, that were built right on the water before zoning.

After town voters considered and rejected a proposal to ease those restrictions, the owners

of the cottage decided to put the camp on the market and move on.

No Plans

Enter the Kamps and their real estate agent. "As soon as we came to the top of the hill in the driveway", Rick recalls, "I looked down on the house and the lake and thought 'this is it'." By the end of the day the cottage was theirs, just ahead of another buyer.

Post-sale, the Kamps' plans included new furniture, deck chairs, a small fishing boat and nothing else. "We're in love with this place", Rick says. "It's a mystery why anyone would want to change it let alone tear it down."

First Summer

During their first summer he and Linda got acquainted with their neighbors, pattered around the yard and explored the lake by boat. Their two boys and various relatives were frequent guests.

"I didn't do any fishing but I'll get to it next year," he said last month as he pulled his boat out of the water for the season.

Just down the shore is the cottage colony that was known as Lakin's Cottages and, later, Gardner's Camps. While each cottage has an individual owner now, little else has changed. It's where Rick and his older brother, Tom, stayed that summer when he was nine.

"Tom was killed in Vietnam", Rick says. "I still miss him terribly. To own this place just down the shore from where we stayed that summer and to see how much this spot still looks the same brings back a lot of memories."

TO OUR READERS:

OSSIPEE LAKE NEWS delivers free up to the minute information about the lake by e-mail, as events warrant. Contact subscribe@ossipeelake.org

Report mail address changes to mail@ossipeelake.org or send to PO Box 173, Freedom NH 03836.



The Alliance is a member of the New Hampshire Lakes Association (www.nhlakes.org).

BEACH NOT JUSTIFIED, PROTECTION PLAN IS, ALLIANCE SAYS

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Management Change

What changed in the intervening years? DRED's commissioner for one thing. The agency's 1999 decision was made by George Bald, who left DRED at the end of 2003 and was replaced by O'Kane in April, 2004.

Allison McLean, DRED's Parks & Recreation Director, says the new commissioner was unaware of the previous ruling when he began meeting with Harry Merrow, the Ossipee Selectman and State Representative who is leading the beach effort.

McLean says that DRED has known about the problems at the Natural Area for some time but does not have the money to take corrective action. In 1994 and 2003 DRED staff researchers recommended that the agency create a restoration and protection plan to prevent further damage to the site's rare plants and natural communities.

"We are strapped," McLean says. "We thought if Ossipee officials were willing to help address the problems at the site, we should re-open consideration of a beach."

Joint Stewardship

Speaking with the Alliance this month, McLean said that if a beach is approved the agency expects Ossipee to assume joint responsibility for overseeing the 400-acre wetland preserve, not just the 600 feet of shoreline it wants to lease.

"All of the issues on the property must be jointly addressed in any plan that permits recreation," she says. Among those issues is what to do about the extensive damage being caused by people using the 3,600 foot shoreline.

In an April letter to the town, McLean suggested that the state would be open to adding the Pine River boat ramp to the Natural Area shoreline and create a "single operational unit" for the town to oversee. She says "it is in the best interest of the public and the natural resources on the site to look at the property as a whole."

Yet, public statements by Ossipee officials have focused only on the small section of shoreline they want to lease. Last month Merrow told a reporter the town would "make things better by providing a plan and enforcement to protect at least a small portion of the beach." He then asked why those who oppose his plan "don't do anything about those people" using the rest of the shoreline.



Ossipee's selectmen say they need state land to supplement Duncan Lake Beach, above.

Alliance Photo

Financial Considerations

The state's expectations that Ossipee will help manage the entire Natural Area has sparked discussion among a number of town property owners who have been writing to newspapers saying a new beach is unnecessary. They question why the town has started spending money without knowing the final expense to the town or whether the plan can succeed.

Thus far the only financial figure town officials have put forward is the \$20,000 they asked voters to approve last spring for a parking lot and a boardwalk on the property.

At Town Meeting it was agreed that feasibility studies could also come out of that fund, and the decision proved to be timely. A few weeks later the selectmen received a two-page letter from DRED detailing the studies and plans that need to be carried out and funded by the town, including plans to protect the site's rare plants and ancient relics.

In August, the town hired The Nature Conservancy to inventory plants in the area where it wants to build a boardwalk to the water. The town is also required to hire specialists to conduct a multi-part archeological study, and it must determine whether there may be rare and endangered wildlife on the property.

State's Track Record

Those who favor and those who oppose subdividing the Natural Area for recreation agree on one thing: DRED has done an inadequate job of managing the property.

Recreation has soared at the site since the state acquired the land in 1969, and those numbers have taken their toll. Volunteers have counted as many as 3,000 people at the site with tents, lawn chairs, and portable grills. Neighboring property owners report open fires and overnight camping, both of which are prohibited by the few remaining state signs that have not been torn down.

"McLean says that DRED has known about the problems but does not have the money to take action."

MILFOIL PROGRAM WRAPS UP FIRST YEAR, LOOKS TO NEXT SEASON

The early drawdown of the lake also brought the Exotic Species Prevention program (ESP) to an early end this season as hundreds of boaters removed their vessels over the course of two weekends in advance of the lowering water.

At the boats ramps that participated in the program, the percentage of boaters checking for and removing weeds that they found clinging to props and trailers was increased by the activities that took place during the first full season of the initiative.

With the support of the N.H. Department of Environmental Services, the Alliance's comprehensive new milfoil prevention program created a lake-wide coalition of ramp owners who each developed a site-specific plan to increase awareness of invasive weeds among those using their ramp.

From member mailings to association meetings to distribution of materials at the site, a majority of the lake's ramp owners took action to increase awareness among boaters that a small fragment of the weed can create a new infestation on the lake or travel to another lake to do the same.

Pamphlet Developed

At the suggestion of the program's participants the Alliance created and printed thousands of copies of a milfoil awareness pamphlet that is specific to Ossipee Lake.

ESP's program director, Susan Marks, says the pamphlet was extremely well-received.

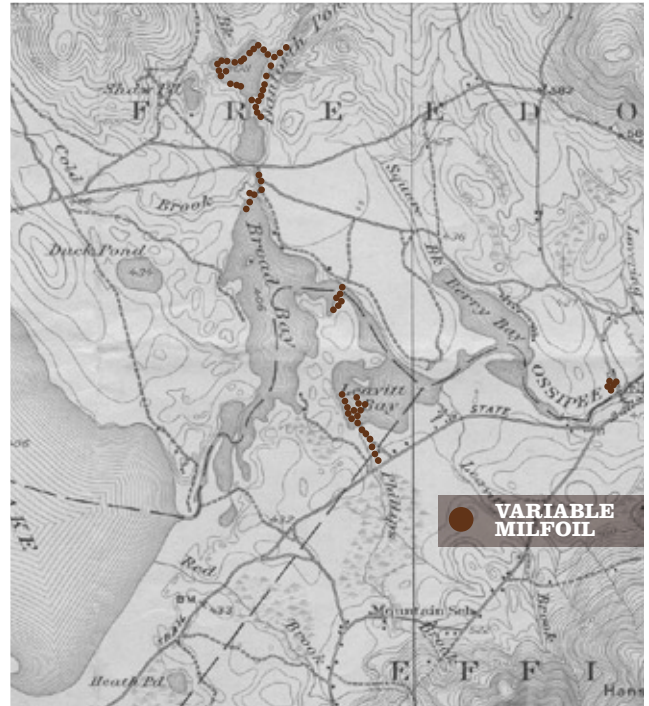
"It shows the location of the primary infestations and urges caution when traveling in those areas. They were available at two of the lake's marinas this summer and were also available at town halls and libraries."

Some of the owners of the lake's unmanned ramps purchased plastic water-tight display boxes and metal posts to make the pamphlet available on-site. Meanwhile, campgrounds and lake associations made milfoil a part of their annual meetings and activities.

This fall the Alliance plans to mail the pamphlet to all of the lake's property owners for their own use and for renters who bring boats to the lake.

Greater Awareness

The number of state warning signs also increased as part of the program. Alliance vol-



Map from the Alliance's new milfoil awareness pamphlet shows the lake's infested areas. The pamphlet is being distributed as part of the ESP program. *Alliance Photo*

unteers and program participants replaced outdated signs at ramps around the lake and posted signs for the first time at more than a dozen locations.

June D'Andrea, the Alliance's program coordinator and head of the Alliance Weed Watchers effort, made presentations to a number of groups on the lake including the annual meetings at Totem Pole Park and Danforth Bays Camping Resort.

She says she received numerous calls from residents and boaters reporting suspicious weeds, but fortunately all of the weeds proved to be the beneficial native variety.

Planning for Next Year

Many of the suggestions from participants in the program will be implemented next year, including creating awareness reminders, such as boat windshield stickers and key chains. Ossipee officials say they will consider participating in the Lake Host program next year to ensure coverage at the town ramp on Pequawket Trail, which is one of the most heavily-used unmanned ramps on the lake.

The Alliance will also seek the cooperation of the N.H. Fish & Game Department to ensure that the boats in the lake's bass fishing tournaments are inspected for milfoil before launch.

N.H. LAKES ASSOCIATION OPPOSES LEASING STATE LAND FOR PRIVATE GAIN

Article courtesy of "Lakeside," publication of the N.H. Lakes Association

Undeveloped state lands on public waters protect water quality by slowing surface runoff; they can also provide access for recreational uses (e.g., boating, swimming, and fishing). NHLA opposes leasing such public lands for private gain.

In 2004, the NH Dept. of Environmental Services (DES) relaxed its dock permitting rules to allow dock construction on land leased from the state by private NH residents. All lands on public waters (such as old railroad beds and old roads) managed by the Bureau of Rail & Transit in the Department of Transportation may be leased for residential use at an annual cost of \$25 per linear foot of shoreline. The lease is for five years, with an unlimited optional renewal upon expiration.

An increasingly popular method of utilizing undeveloped shoreline along our lakes and ponds is to lease property from the state and then install a docking structure. The state standard for a dock requires that there be at least 75 feet of frontage to provide two boat slips, with 75 additional feet required for each subsequent boat slip. By leasing state-owned land adjacent to a lake and installing a docking structure, a developer can provide lake access to otherwise land-locked property. The development value of the property increases substantially. Additionally, the boat slips can be rented to the new homeowners in the development, providing significant revenues.

For example, a developer could lease 1,000 feet of shoreline frontage for a five-year term, paying \$25,000 per year. DES could permit up to 14 boat slips. At an average of \$25,000 per slip (depending upon location), the developer would receive \$350,000 per year renting the slips to the homeowners, minus the \$25,000 lease payment, for an annual net profit of \$325,000. Such a scenario has in fact occurred on several NH lakes.

What is the process for determining which state-owned lands may be leased or sold? The law requires that the Council on Resources and

Development (CORD) must first determine that the land is no longer needed by the state. CORD, composed of the chief executives of 13 state agencies, also notifies local and county municipalities about the proposed lease or sale. The Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) and the Lakes Management Advisory Committee (LMAC) both must review the proposal and make recommendations to CORD. Whether or not the RMAC and



LMAC can veto or block a CORD decision to dispose of state-owned land remains an unanswered legal question.

The Public Water Access Advisory Board (PWAAB) is also asked to comment upon proposals to dispose of state property, but this is done as a courtesy to help facilitate possible new sites for access to public waters. Such consultation is not required. Due to limited funding, PWAAB considers state land from the perspective of its appropriateness for motorized boating access only. The Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act was established to protect water quality by "...preventing uncoordinated, unplanned and piecemeal development along the state's shorelines, which could result in significant negative impacts on the public waters of New Hampshire."

Is the leasing of state-owned land along our public waters for private gain in the best public interest? These shorelands are among the state's most valuable and fragile natural resources and their protection is essential to maintain the quality of public waters.

"Undeveloped state-owned shorefront property is a vital natural resource that should not be leased for private use..."
N.H. Lakes Association

INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF OSSIPEE LAKE

It's New Hampshire's best north country lake for fishing, boating and swimming. Home of the state's finest remaining examples of unique habitats. The location of one of your most important real estate investments. It's Ossipee Lake, and there's only one organization dedicated to preserving and protecting it: Ossipee Lake Alliance. Please invest in the future of your lake by joining us.

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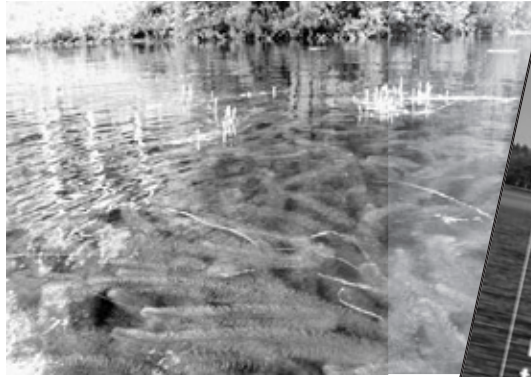
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THANK YOU . . .

With help from the boat ramp owners who participated in our Exotic Species Prevention program this summer, thousands of Ossipee Lake boaters are now more aware of the threat that milfoil poses to our lake and local economy.

Please join us in thanking the following organizations and businesses who helped make the first year of this unique lake-wide effort a success.

Freedom Board of Selectmen

Ossipee Board of Selectmen

Effingham Conservation Commission

Freedom Conservation Commission

Ossipee Conservation Commission

Berry Bay Association

Broad-Leavitt Bay Association

Calumet Conference Center & Camp Calumet

Camp Robin Hood

Danforth Bays Camping Resort

Deer Cove Condominium Association

Freedom Village Condominiums

Indian Mound Property Owners Association

Lakefront Landing Marina & Campground

Lakeview Lot Owners Association

Leavitt Bay South Shore Association

Loon Lake of Freedom Association

Mountview Property Owners Association

North Broad Bay Association

Ossipee Bluffs Association

Ossipee Lake Camping Area

Pine Landing Beach Club

Totem Pole Park Campground

Ward's Boat Shop

Westward Shores Marina

New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

BEACH NOT JUSTIFIED, PROTECTION PLAN IS, ALLIANCE SAYS

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When Merrow announced last November that he had been negotiating with the state, he wrote that the area behind the shoreline was "a minefield with used toilet paper."

He says that Ossipee will bring better management to the 600 feet of shoreline that the town will lease, and he argues that creating land access from Route 25 will reduce the number of people who travel to the site by boat.

Those who oppose Merrow's plan say that creating land access will increase the number of people using the preserve and do nothing about the damage being caused on the shoreline. They also say the town has not established that it needs state land for a new beach to supplement its town beach on Duncan Lake.

No Guarantees

DRED officials caution that there is no agreement with the town on anything other than the process by which the beach idea will be evaluated and the expectation that there will be joint stewardship of the entire property.

Once the town's studies and plans have been completed, the state plans to solicit public input, including abutting property owners and lake and environmental organizations. At the end of the process they say there is no guarantee that the result will be any different from the agency's decision in 1999.

Ossipee Lake Alliance has created a web page on the Natural Area. It can be found in the "Special Places" page on the Alliance's website or at www.ossipeelake.org/longsands.

A WALK IN THE NATURAL AREA

To get a perspective on a place like Ossipee Lake Natural Area there is nothing like exploring it with a biologist - especially if it's Barre Hellquist, the long-time lake resident and co-author of "Aquatic and Wetland Plants of North America."

Hellquist's interest in the lake began when he was a graduate student at UNH and he has been studying the lake ever since.

On an early August morning he joined us to make our way past the homes on Long Sands Road to enter an environment unlike any other on the lake. Well ahead of the boaters who gather there during the day, we had the place to ourselves.

"There used to be Mermaid Weed and Virginia Meadow Beauty here," Hellquist says, scouring the shrubbery as we passed clumps of native cranberries and high bush blueberries. "I'd love to find some."

Sandpipers scattered as we stopped to admire the cold springs that run out of the marshes into the lake, leaving a meandering trail of deep purple in the sand.

"I'm told that's amethyst," Hellquist says, "but I'm not certain. Whatever it is, it's pretty."

For Hellquist, the question of whether the Natural Area contains as many rare plants as previously documented or ancient settlements is more of a curiosity than a practical consideration.

"An open space wetland like this is rare to

find. It's a buffer to development and a unique and historic part of the lake. In most states that would be enough to ensure its long-term protection and preservation."

Just around a bend a five-foot square padlocked wooden storage locker sits in the bushes among the litter. Two years ago state researchers uncovered this locker so we're surprised to see it's still there. Curious to know what is inside we gave it a good pummeling, but to no avail.



Then, a find. Next to a stretch of a reed-like water grass known as *Schoenoplectus torreyi* we uncover a narrow-leaf goldenrod called *Euthamia*. "Not rare but certainly uncommon," Hellquist pronounces, snapping his camera to document the specimen.

While much remains here much has already been lost, Hellquist says. That includes the peat mats that used to extend well into the lake. "The water level used to decrease gradually in the summer because property owners wanted a bit of beach along their shorefront. Now it's kept high to accommodate boaters and the high water has washed away most of the mats."

As boaters start approaching we make our way back. "You know, if the state didn't own this property, private organizations would be eager to buy it and give it the long-term protection it deserves," Hellquist offers as a parting thought.

**"If the state didn't already own this property, private organizations would be eager to buy it and give it the long-term protection it deserves."
Barre Hellquist**



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Preserve. Protect. Educate.

