VAN VLIET NEWS

SPECIAL ISSUE FALL 1996

SPECIAL MEETING ON PROPOSED BOAT LANDING

On October 26th, approximately 40 people attended a special meeting called by the Department of Natural Resources at the Community Building in Presque Isle. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss proposals for a new boat landing on Van Vliet Lake.

Over the last several years, the present boat landing has been the subject of controversy. The landing is located on private property owned by a Mr. Jim Krahn. It has been used by the public for many years as a public boat landing.

Several years ago, the landing was the subject of legal action between Mr. Krahn and the Town of Presque Isle. The result of the litigation was a temporary order requiring that the landing remain open to the public. Eventually, the litigation was settled on the basis that the Town would relinquish its claims to the property (based on years of continuous public usage) if an adequate alternate landing were developed by the DNR.

Mr. Krahn has purchased a lot on the southeast side of Van Vliet Lake and has offered to sell it to the DNR for a boat landing. The DNR has presented an offer to purchase which has been accepted subject to certain contingencies. The lot is immediately adjacent to the property on which Steve and Nancy Frank have recently constructed a new second home.

The Franks, Mr. Krahn and the DNR have been talking for some time about the various alternatives for construction of the new boat landing.

The existing landing is considered to be inadequate by present DNR standards. It is also considered by some to be unsafe.

The new landing would hold 7 to 8 boat rigs. The DNR has indicated that it would make efforts to preserve as much of the natural site as possible. It has indicated that it would consult with the Lake Association in that regard.

The Association has not been consulted in the process of developing these proposals and has not had an opportunity to provide formal input.

Nine of our members sent letters in advance of the meeting. All were opposed the the development of the proposed boat landing.

Of the members of the Association present, it appeared that the large majority opposed development of the landing. Several individuals not resident on Van Vliet Lake spoke in favor of the proposed landing.

It appears that the DNR favors the development of the landing.

Concerns raised by members of the Association included increased boat traffic, increased pressure on the fishery, increased potential for pollution or introduction of exotic species into the lake. Members indicated that there were two landings on Presque Isle Lake and that the current landing seemed adequate for the needs of the users of Van Vliet Lake.

Another issue which was raised is that the Association is seeking to develop a lake management plan and has been working with other sections of the DNR and Vilas County in that regard. A request was made to defer action on the landing until a plan could be developed which included fish management, aquatic plant management, water quality management and appropriate public access. It was requested that the DNR provide more technical support in the development of the lake management plan.

Several individuals speculated on the cost of development of the landing. Although no hard numbers were produced, it is speculated that it will cost plus or minus $150,000. Many felt that money could be better spent on preservation and management of the resource rather than on the addition of a new landing.

Frustration was also indicated at the late date at which the Association was first involved in the discussions of the landing -- particularly given the knowledge of DNR personnel of the Association's interest in developing a lake management plan.

All of the parties at the meeting presented fair and reasonable discussions of the issues.

The DNR currently has two site plans developed. Site A is quite close to the Frank's lot line and is considered unacceptable by them. Site B, which is more centrally located on the lot but which provides a poorer landing site, is much more acceptable to the Frank's. It appears that Site B is also acceptable to the DNR.

It appeared to be the consensus of those members of the Association at the meeting that Site B was more acceptable if preservation of the existing site was not an alternative.

The potential for retaining the present site is unclear. Mr. Krahn would oppose it. If the DNR were not to proceed, the position of the Town was not stated. The outcome of any litigation is not certain.

It is important that you provide your thoughts both to the DNR, to the Town of Presque Isle and to the leadership of the Van Vliet Lake Association. As individuals, your leaders all have their own opinions, but we must have yours to adequately represent you. Please address your thoughts to:

Mike Coshun
DNR
8770 Hwy J
Woodruff, WI 54568

Jack Harrison
Town Chairman
Presque Isle, WI 54557

Tom Olson
Van Vliet Lake Association
837 Sauk Ridge Trail
Madison, WI 53717

Send you letters by November 10th.

One Man's Opinion

As the Editor of your Newsletter and President of your Association, I am taking the privilege of providing my opinion on the boat landing situation. Please consider it for what it is worth.

Key points:

*Van Vliet Lake needs a boat landing;
*The current landing is poor but adequate;
*The Association is concerned about the health of the lake;
*The Association represents the interests of the property owners and not the general public;
*Peace and tranquillity is the #1 interest of members of the Association;
*The Association is working with the DNR and Vilas County to develop a lake management plan;
*Currently, a small amount of DNR staff time and cost has been devoted to the plan;
*Currently, a larger amount of DNR staff time and cost has been or will devoted to the boat landing development;
*Van Vliet Lake is a PUBLIC RESOURCE and deserves the development of an integrated lake management plan;
*The issue of public access needs should be assessed in the context of a lake management plan -- including fish management, plant management and water quality management;
*If Van Vliet Lake is to remain a quality public resource, such an integrated plan should be developed and implemented;
*If Van Vliet Lake does not remain a quality public resource, a new boat landing is a waste of money.

I plan to write to the DNR and urge them to defer action until we can develop a quality lake management plan.

Tom Olson