

Leonard's Mill Pond Collaborative (LMPC)
Annual Meeting
Wicomico County Tourist Center
October 29, 2013

Introduction

Volunteer coordinator Phillip LeBel opened the meeting with general remarks about the purpose of the Collaborative and progress made to date. Following the posted agenda, Wicomico Parks and Recreation Superintendent Chuck Poole provided an overview of the pond treatment for 2013.

Chuck Poole, Superintendent of Wicomico County Parks and Recreation

Chuck explained briefly the continuing work by Parks and Recreation to maintain county ponds. He noted that next year will be the last of our three-year pond treatment permit issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment. Based on a continuing commitment by Collaborative waterfront property owners, a new permit request would need to be submitted before the end of 2014. The 2013 hydrilla invoice of \$4,593 represents replacement of the amount of product used during this year's treatment. Depending on how much growth takes place between now and the spring of 2014, application may involve the same or possibly less than this year's treatment.

In terms of the current program, Chuck emphasized that the targeted treatment every year is making a significant improvement in pond quality. The goal of the treatment program is to ward off water hypoxia while maintaining sufficient plant stocks to sustain fish and wildlife populations. Noting that the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has acquired a smaller boat for product treatment, he indicated that DPR technical personnel may be able to extend coverage to hitherto neglected areas while maintaining environmental quality.

As a point of comparison, Chuck noted that all freshwater bodies go through a life cycle that unless upended by some cataclysmic event ends in a return of a water body to a land mass. Some ponds such as Schumaker are farther along in that life cycle than others. A recent DNR survey found that Leonard's Mill is in relatively good shape and that the treatment program is deferring the otherwise natural progression to an eventual land mass.

Some discussion ensued regarding alternatives to chemical treatment of the pond. One participant suggested that we might enlist student volunteers from Salisbury University to engage in a cleanup program in which pond landmass could be gathered up and then taken to other sites for compost. In so doing, it would provide an alternative to chemical treatment and lower prospective costs. Lacking an infrastructure to adopt such a measure, it was suggested that if additional information is forthcoming, the LMPC could consider creation of a blog in which ideas such as this could be shared among all residents for possible future action.

Another suggestion was whether we might consider introduction of grass carp into the pond to contain weed growth. Chuck pointed out that where this has been done, it usually generates a degradation in pond biodiversity as grass carp consume not only vegetation, but many fish species as well.

Lee Outen, Wicomico County Division, State Highway Authority

Lee Outen's presentation was on behalf of the Wicomico County Division of the State Highway Authority regarding pond dam gate management. With color photos of the current sluice gate control system, he explained how the gate system works under normal circumstances via a floater that automatically adjusts to benchmark water levels. At times, the floater system becomes clogged with pond material and manual adjustment is sometimes applied.

Although the gate control system is due for a review and possible upgrade, at present it works reasonably well. Lee noted that when opened fully, the pond can be drained substantially within a matter of hours. As to flooding from excess rainfall, the floater system sometimes takes some time to adjust to the higher than normal water levels, and this is a reason why the current mechanism is due for a review and possible upgrade.

One question was whether there would be a problem when logs are transported to the dam area to maintain an open channel for boat traffic. Lee noted that there is a spillway to contain most of such debris but that when very large logs get caught under a sluice gate, the motor turnkey may break as part of a safety process to protect the motor. How well efforts to maintain boat traffic channels and the operation of the sluice gates depends in the end on the volume of both and on how often logs may cause a failure in the gate motor control system.

Lee noted that it has been a practice of his division to lower the pond in anticipation of significant storm-water accumulation and that this practice was one that could keep highway bridges from stress. He can be reached at 410-548-4782. At that point, Lee Beauchamp, supervisor at the Wicomico County division introduced himself and offered his congratulations to the LMPC residents for their efforts to maintain the quality of the Leonard's Mill ecosystem.

LMPC Treasurer's report

Marilyn Booth reported that as of October 25, 2013, the balance on hand stood at \$8,343.29. Contributions were \$3,000. Expenses were \$4,648.86, leaving a balance on hand as of October 29, 2013 of \$6,694.43, with a projected Sonar surface weed invoice of approximately \$250 still to be processed. A post-meeting update added \$375 by five residents, bringing total contributions to \$3,375 and a balance of \$7,069.43, with an overall 2013 participation rate of 72.88 percent. This represents a reduction of just over 19 percent from the opening balance for 2013.

An open discussion on fees was then undertaken. It included whether we could get higher participation rates from current owners, raising the fee from \$75 to \$100, lowering the fee, or not raising fees at all to allow the balance to decline until such time as new revenues were necessary to meet current obligations. There seemed to be broad agreement to maintain an annual fee solicitation, and some debate as to whether we could maintain the current balance by higher participation rates among residents or whether the fee should remain at its current level of \$75 per year.

Two proposition were put to a vote: one that the current fee of \$75 should be raised to \$100 and another that the current fee of \$75 should remain in effect for 2014. Of those voting, 8 were in favor of keeping the fee at \$75 while 6 voted to increase it to \$100. It was decided that we would keep the fee at \$75 for the 2014 year. With no allowance for an increase in product price, a further reduction of 19 percent would reduce the fund balance to \$5,395 at current participation rates. Were contribution and participation rates to remain beyond 2014, the balance for 2015 would be insufficient to cover product treatment, even with no increase in the price of the chemical products.

One additional issue under the open discussion was whether the alternate year pond lowering was good for the environment and residents. One resident pointed out that prolonged exposure under the deliberate winter pond lowering in January 2013 precipitated the loss of significant quantities of pond mussels, and that while the raccoons and other land animals and birds no doubt enjoyed the sudden increase in food supplies, the loss of mussels would only add to a lowering of the pond's natural filtration system.

In this discussion, considerable debate took place regarding whether the pond should be lowered every other year, as was voted at the annual meeting in 2012, whether pond lowering should be done at less frequent intervals and for shorter periods of time, and whether winter pond lowering should be done at all. As 2014 would be a pond non-lowering year, no vote was taken on the issue. Recognizing the various concerns, this clearly is an item that will be on the fall 2014 annual meeting agenda.

Marilyn Booth volunteered to once again serve as coordinating treasurer on behalf of LMPC. Phillip LeBel offered his job of volunteer coordinator to any takers. With no takers, we're off to another year.

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<http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~lebelp/LeonardMillPondAssociation.html>