

Winnisquam Watershed Meeting
January 21, 2016 -- Lakes Region Planning Commission

Present: Bob Ward (Sanbornton Town Planner), Dari Sassan (Tilton Land Use Coordinator), Rick Ball (Belmont Land Use Technician), Candace Daigle (Belmont Town Planner), Lisa Morin (Belknap County Conservation District, Laconia Conservation Commission), Angela LaBrecque (Meredith Town Planner), John Edgar (Meredith Community Development Director), Bob Pollock (New Hampton Planning Assistant), Sara Steiner (NH DES VLAP Coordinator), Jeff Hayes (LRPC Executive Director), David Jeffers (LRPC, Regional Planner)

Unable to attend: Shanna Saunders (Laconia City Planner), John Ayer (Gilford Town Planner), Pat Tarpey (Lake Winnepesaukee Association), Rick DeMark (North County Resource & Conservation District)

Introduction: J. Hayes welcomed everyone and explained that this meeting was an initial conversation to explore water quality and land use issues associated with the Lake Winnisquam Watershed, find out what efforts have occurred locally, and to determine whether there is interest in moving forward with any regional watershed planning efforts. There are some watershed planning funds that could be applied for it there is sufficient interest. He expressed appreciation for the fact that so many land use professionals from around the region were able to participate in this discussion.

Local concerns: Each person then gave a summary of issues and activities in their community. This was followed by a discussion about what, if any steps should be taken beyond current efforts.

B. Ward described a 2012 Watershed Management Plan for Black Brook in Sanbornton. The initial focal issue was silt accumulation but it was expanded to address additional topics such as phosphate deposition. Some demonstration BMPs were installed as a result of this. Some of the issues contributing to why this management plan has not been well accepted by local decision-makers, include: a sense that the scope of the project was driven by DES and EPA concerns, the sense that contributions to water deposition from this subwatershed are minimal compared with the other subwatersheds, and the number of lakefront stakeholders impacted is small. Maintaining high water quality ranks as a high level concern in the local master plan.

D. Sassan echoed that water quality rates as a high level concern to people in Tilton; however, he suspects that such concern is mainly found with shorefront landowners. The Conservation Commission has some funds for investment in milfoil removal. Local concerns in Tilton include: a lack of recreational access (and real connection) with the town's water resources, expansion of the sewer system to reach additional households, and no watershed planning initiatives. He also noted that there is some local ownership of the Winnepesaukee River and there are efforts associated with the Tri-Town aquifer and the Tilton-Northfield aqueduct.

R. Ball and C. Daigle noted that Belmont has seen a recent interest in milfoil control efforts. They pointed out that Belmont is "downstream" of everyone in the watershed. Most of the waterfront properties in Belmont are sewered and essentially "built out". Also noted is the fact that the aquifer is an important aspect of Belmont's planning efforts.

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L. Morin pointed out that as the Winnepesaukee River flows through Laconia from Lake Winnepesaukee to Lake Winnisquam it travels through Paugus Bay and the base of Opechee Bay but is also fed by Black (Laconia), Jewett, and Durkee Brooks. Black and Jewett Brooks originate in Gilford and have Watershed Management Plans and Durkee Brook originates in Belmont and has problems with erosion. Most of the shoreland in Laconia is in private ownership and much of it has been developed. She spoke of recent stormwater outreach programs through both NH DES and NH DOT, including the *Soak Up the Rain* program. There have been a variety of milfoil control efforts in conjunction with NH DES. Recently there have been some concerted efforts at trash removal along the banks. Water sampling is conducted by the city's Conservation Technician using a boat from the Laconia Water Department. BCCD has adopted the Winnepesaukee River as the focus of its efforts and also cautioned that there are still some voices opposing regional planning efforts.

A. LaBrecque and J. Edgar described some of the watershed planning efforts in Meredith, pointing out that most of the town's watersheds, including Lake Wickwas (northern section of Winnisquam Watershed) have management plans. The town has a Natural Resources Inventory, similar in scope and format to adjacent New Hampton's NRI. A review of property records indicates that while 45% of Meredith's parcels are waterfront, 65% of the tax base comes from waterfront properties. Also noted was the fact that some properties have received tax abatements due to impacts from milfoil. There are some active homeowner's associations.

While sewerage is a good thing, maintenance and replacement have become a costly issue to local communities. Past and future development on large tracts such as Ahern and Chemung are topics of concern. While many of the smaller parcels have been developed, redevelopment is becoming an issue. Some of the land in the watershed is designated as prime wetlands. It was pointed out that this watershed is a shared interest and that there is growing interest in Meredith towards conservation of land resources.

New Hampton contains some of the uppermost lands in the watershed. There are small segment of the watershed. The town does have the Natural Resources Inventory and is working on development of an Open Space chapter for their Master Plan.

S. Steiner provided information on water quality and sampling efforts in the watershed. The Volunteer Lake Assessment Program (VLAP) has had three sampling sites since the 1980s; Three Islands (north), Pot Island (central), Mohawk Island (south). Trophic studies each decade have shown that the lake is oligotrophic (low in nutrients, generally clear water). Water clarity has been trending downwards at Three Islands and conductivity (salts) has been increasing at Three Islands and Pot Island sites. At Mohawk Island the Dissolved Oxygen levels are poor and there are high levels of phosphorus, especially in sediments. In some years data has been spotty, due to a shortage of local volunteers. Lake Wickwas only samples once a year. UNH's Lay Lakes Monitoring Program has been sampling at Waldren Bay (northwest section) since 1997 and data indicates a reduction in clarity and borderline phosphorus. There have been some advisories due to *e.coli* at Ahern, Bartlett, and Sanbornton beaches, causes may be associated with geese and pets.

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Summation: As the group began to discuss all of the information presented, several people noted that the limited sampling efforts might be an indicator of the fragmented, parochial view of the lake. It was felt that there is a need to bolster the water sampling program, and to develop more organization and structure. While it was pointed out that there are numerous homeowners associations throughout the watershed, there seems to be a need for a watershed advocate; the Lake Sunapee Association was pointed to as an example. It was agreed that whatever comes from these discussions should be a municipal planning effort, distinct from a lake association and that the group's goals should reflect that. LRPC might serve as leader and convener of discussions and watershed planning efforts but only if asked to do so by the communities in the watershed.

Actions: Tilton and Belmont will both seek to identify volunteers to assist with sampling efforts. Each community will go to their community decision-makers, including Planning Boards to ask for support in moving forward with a regional watershed planning effort. If there is support, a second meeting will be set.