



Devils Lake Water Improvement District
Special Meeting
1206 SE 48th Pl, Lincoln City, OR 97367
and via zoom
March 21, 2023

MINUTES

Call to Order at 5:15 pm

Roll Call: Tina French, Keith Fowler, Colin Teem, and Susan Elworth (in person); Mitch Moore (online)

DLWID Staff Present: Lake Manager, Executive Director: Joshua Brainerd (in person); Eric Johnson (online)

Approval of Consent Agenda

Tina will add carp permit to the agenda.

MOTION: Moved by Colin Teem, Seconded by Keith Fowler to approve agenda. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Tina apologized for technical problems at the last meeting.

Public Comment

Six members of public attended – asked questions

Existing In-Water Programs

- **Vegetation Management Plan**

Harvester – found new one in September with four-year lease. Length of lease was based on how long the carp got rid of weeds last time. The goal is to make lake usable this summer.

Carp Permit - ODF&W approved, resubmitted permit with comments; Josh said they are responding.

Fish expected to be in water end of April or early May (5,000 fish). DLWID added a restocking request for total of 10,000 fish. Tina said DLWID should retain the right (with data) to not wait 5 years for restocking. Susan reported that they ask for deaths, escapes of carp by next fall, then another report two years later. 2028 would be two years after harvesting complete – if no restocking for five years.

Life expectancy of the carp is 20 years, but carp were stocked in 1989 and there are still some in the lake. There was discussion about the sea lion in 2018 that ate most of them, and how to prevent that from happening again. Discussion took place about the older the fish, the less they will eat. There was hope for 20,000 fish being stocked this time (too many last time). The goal for the lake is to have 25% vegetation, and there is about 80% now.

Keith said that last year the lake's clarity was best he's ever seen, and now weeds are growing. Keith asked about submitting report next year with data, which may build a case for restocking sooner. The ODF&W rule change was for just Devils Lake. With no boat wash station or staff to ensure that boats taken from the lake don't take weeds to other bodies of water, ODF&W is cautious. Discussion took place about how the weeds exploded from Brown Bear, which shows that they were brought in by a boat from somewhere else. It was agreed to get the permit as good as we can get it, then keep collecting data. When asked about budget for more fish, Josh said that depends on other expenses.

Susan talked about the permit requirements: Biannual reports, stocking the carp at former marina, posting signs at public boat launches re: invasive species and the number to call about the carp, giving carp carcasses to ODF&W, and within five years, a full survey needed and no additional stocking until then. Discussion took place about providing a full survey every year to ODF&W, which could provide data needed.

ODF&W wants to see the effect of carp after harvesting – they are optimistic about use of 5,000 carp. Discussion took place about carp being part of the answer, along with harvesting and herbicides. There are no requirements on the permit about use of the harvester (how many days/hours).

Mitch asked about the harvesting area – fish released at marina, harvesting in other areas. It was agreed there would be no harvesting near marina in 2023.

Keith asked about seal and sea lion mitigation plan. Josh said we can't touch them, but OK to make them uncomfortable with noise. They come in through D River. It's been several years ago, on December 30th (during the Coho run). Need to be reported and make some noise. Question asked about sterile carp, this is a universal policy throughout U.S., because they can reproduce so fast, there would be too many fish.

MOTION to accept latest version of the permit and to send to ODF&W tomorrow – Moved by Tina, Susan seconded, passed unanimously.

- **Harvesting**

Tina said that the lake needs weeds in order to begin harvesting. There's been no new growth where she checked. She found sandy bottom where they sprayed on East Devils Lake Road. But still a lot of growth near the marina. Keith asked about expected growth. Josh said when the water reaches 60 degrees, so harvesting might be later due to cooler water. Mitch said weeds by May 15th last year. Colin said in April last year, weeds were not yet to the surface.

Eric was suggested that neighbors be asked to notify district when they see growth of weeds. Susan said she looked by kayak last weekend and saw no weeds. Harvester goes down 6 feet, water lilies are starting to grow now. Harvester will cut lilies too, the rhizomes are huge – size of a football. When asked how quickly the water heats up, Josh answered that it depends on sunshine. If weeds are not yet growing, we can't scrape the bottom of the lake, but that is what grass carp will do, the fish will get rid of small, lower stuff then move on. They will eventually migrate through the lake. It was suggested that maybe harvest the cove before fish are released so that they will move. When asked about survival rate, the company predicts less than 5% loss when transported from Arkansas, and they will pump the fish into the lake.

Tina talked about what is needed to harvest the weeds: harvester and excavator, trucks, dump trailer, place to dump the weeds and people who can rake. Last time harvesting was done, there were lots of drop off zones needed, but this harvester is much faster. Need access to strategic locations to leave huge piles of weeds. Colin said he thought the best locations are Water Avenue, Brown Bear, Holmes Road, and Regatta. Wabushka area is OK, but because of the shape of the dock, this bigger harvester may not work there. Private properties didn't work so well. A challenge is that the operator needs to be an employee with workers comp at \$40/hr billed to DLWID. Must be able to run the harvester double the time than last year. The harvester can dump, and haul away, then volunteers can come in with rakes to leave area cleaned up. Online sign-up didn't work well last year. Mitch said that the Water Avenue property is not park or roadway. It was used last year and was a good location.

It was suggested that the dumping be done a couple of weeks at a location, then move to another area. Harvesting most of the day, then clean up at end of day. Discussion took place about how fast harvesting could be done and the number of people needed.

Operator must be skilled at working heavy equipment. Bill Sexton willing to train JJ French and Colin Teem. The harvester operates like a skid steer. Josh will look into the possible conflict of interest using NLSS – he will contact Special Districts office. Colin will look into other contractors in the area. Colin asked about other area contractors contributing one of their employees to help. It was suggested that altering the bucket of an excavator could help lifting the weeds. There was trouble dumping from harvester to shore. Brown Bear would be good location to dump. Discussion took place about using a trailer vs. drop box and how many weeds could be packed in. It was agreed a drop box is the most efficient, but with a drop box a CDL driver is needed. With a pickup and trailer, anyone can operate. There was further discussion of equipment and what works best.

Colin asked about a volunteer coordinator. Tina said not so many volunteers needed this year. driven. Discussion took place about how fast word can get out about when/where volunteers needed. An online scheduler was used last year. Mitch said DLNA has a volunteer page. The SW quadrant is typically the warmest area of the lake. Discussion took place about where to go, and whether the location should be complaint

It was agreed the weather would be the determining factor, probably May through October, harvesting 8 hrs/day - 5 days/week. Funds for fuel and mechanical repair for the harvester are needed. Mobile services could be provided by NLSS.

Mitch said that DLNA can ask for donations (they raised \$16,000 for fireworks), but need to avoid going over \$50,000. Suggested to begin asking for donations when Eric sends message to contact when they see weeds, just a general donation to clean up lake, and a message to property owners who want their area harvested. Discussion took place about two strategies – one for spring when weeds actively growing, and one message later (fall) when rafts of weeds in lake. The goal this year is to maintain navigability of the lake, then getting as much out of the lake (floating rafts). Navigability is different for different watercraft. Those who are fishing, want to get to bottom of lake.

Discussion took place about the cost of the fish (\$20/fish – 5,000 fish). Further discussion about whether tagging is needed when they are restocked, fish would be cheaper without tagging.

2023-24 Vegetation Management Program Requirements

DLWID Mechanical Harvesting Operating Costs (Attachment A)

Boat Operator \$80.00/hr – Tina said this can be reduced to \$40.00/hr

Boat lease \$92.00/hr

One Bin \$120.00

Total Cost for 1 day (8 hours) of operation \$1,480.00

Total Cost for 10 days (80 hours) of operation \$14,800.00

Total Cost for 15 days (120 hours) of operation \$22,200.00

Total Cost for 20 days (160 hours) of operation \$29,600.00

Total annual cost for average 15 days per month of operation \$266,400.00

These figures do not include costs for loading into bins, disposal fees, or equipment maintenance, Estimates based on current rates: Harvester \$15,400 (168 hours); Harvester \$700 per every 8 hours over 168 per month; Harvester Operator \$80 per hour

Need to add cost of fuel and maintenance, NLSS can provide repairs for time and materials. Cost of boat storage would be zero.

Tina expressed about using the hour meter on the machine, and would like to be charged hourly for use of the harvester. She got fuel information from Bill, which would be about 10 gal/day.

- **Herbicides**

DEQ and EPA were consulted for private homeowner use and it was approved, but not for DLWID (considered commercial). Discussion took place about providing general information to homeowners for this use. Discussion took place about general information about approved use and about unintended consequences, which is absorbed by plants, no toxicity to fish or wildlife. It is sprayed on top and it sinks.

Another herbicide was approved for DLWID use, done at Sand Point. Mitch said he would like herbicide concentrated on parrot feather. Discussion about use of herbicide on parrot feather, DEQ requires commercial company to apply. Josh will check into DLWID getting permit to apply.

Susan suggested that cost of this work might exceed what is currently in the budget.

- **Water Quality monitoring**

Josh said cost has been reduced. Should be no changes (\$6-8,000)

- **E Coli testing**

- **HABS monitoring and testing**

One test was done last year at end of season, OHA processes for free, cost is just Josh's time.

- **Lake Bottom Aeration System**

This is the fourth continuous year, it should run 10 years without maintenance (Bill was able to do minor repair at no cost) – about \$600/month to operate.

- **D River Dredging (Emergency west side)**

Cost is split with the City.

- **D River Dredging (proposed east side)**

Last conversation with contractor was cost of \$750,000 because of Army Corp of Engineers. This would be good candidate for a grant. Need one more property owner to identify and sign permit. Discussion took place about the priority of dredging ahead of the landing project, agreed about the need to plan to “shop” the landing project. State grant would be needed, Tina said lots of grant money available.

County now has grant writing team, it was suggested the need to explore that, and looking for grant writers who specialize in this kind of work, not county employees. Josh found some more referrals last week and he will follow up if directed, many require matching funds.

- **Public Canal Maintenance**

Josh reported that the 1st and 3rd street canals had not been touched in 45 years. The dead heads have been removed, so the harvester can be used now, it is navigable until the water level drops. Josh has found parrot feather there. Discussion took place about flooding in the area, and the need to dredge the river, then the canals. Agreed that it makes sense to explore because it would help those residents.

Current District Resources

- **Sample Budget** (Attachment C)

Josh said that this is pretty much what he plans to present to the budget committee. Mitch said he would review more closely. First budget meeting scheduled for 4/13.

- **Current Financial Report** (Attachment D)

Nothing glaring, Josh said the legislative grant of \$310,000 last year helped a lot.

Potential Tax Levy

Josh said the general tax levy has not changed since it was created in 1983. There are options on longer term projects, Josh would recommend not too many projects at once. D River one project, USDA grants may be available for Blue Heron Landing. These grants have various percentages, loans at 3.5% for 30 years and paired with other grants (Federal). Josh’s time can be used as in-kind donation. Each project should have possible funders and own timeline.

Tina said that she thinks the district is in need of increasing the tax levy and that it is justified, even if just for vegetation management, but in this economy it was a terrible idea. Colin agreed, that as much as it was needed, it was not approved. Discussion took place that this is just not a good time, or next year, probably at least 4 years before it might pass.

Discussion about weighing grant money vs. tax levy, grant money is better option. Better to commit resources to grant writing team. Mitch said that this November or next May not good, maybe discussion again, but better to concentrate of donations or grants. Susan said she was struggling with numbers in the budget and projects to do, and commitment to state agency to harvest in order to get fish.

Discussion about survey regarding possibility of levy passage, one mailer was about \$6,000 last time. Fire department had a hard time passing. No answer when state funding is used up. Running at normal operations, what does that budget look like? Maybe again in November, and building at the marina is an opportunity to get support. Board members commented that they don't want to drop the issue of a tax levy increase, but to look into future.

- Outside Funding (Attachment B)/State Legislative Funds/Donations

Colin suggested looking for grants, and if nothing, then out for levy in November, and if grants found, levy might not be needed. Different grants should be pursued for different projects. Tina expressed concern about ongoing costs without tax levy increase. Josh said we are no longer in surplus. Operational costs not likely for grants, he would like to pursue grants from agencies, not legislature. He expressed confidence in getting grants for dredging, some likelihood for landing project. Ongoing operations now include vegetation management and aeration - \$225,000 with no fish, harvesting - \$315,00.

- November 8, 2022 Election Results

The question was posed: With grants can we survive for a couple more years before a tax levy increase? Agreed to be better informed before going for levy again. November 2022 election results were discussed. The measure did not even pass with lakefront owners. More work needed on the campaign, since so many people don't understand the status of DWID finances. Some election resources will be available next time, and it was agreed that when it is time, it will be done differently. When lake weeds are under control, there may be a better chance of success.

Discussion about concerts on lake and about lines from the aerator. It was agreed that those lines are pretty tough.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:56 pm

Submitted by Susan Wahlke