

SUMMARY OF TOWN HALL MEETING  
Pequot Lakes, MN 10/24/07  
Subject: DNR Rules Pertaining To Docks  
Host: State Representative Larry Howes, Walker

Other Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives present:

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert, Marshall  
Representative Denny McNamara, Hastings  
Representative Dean Simpson, Perham  
Representative Steve Smith, Mound

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources staff present: Tom Hovey

A total of 103 people attended the meeting.

Rep. Howes welcomed attendees. He stated that judging by the volume of e-mail he has received regarding the subject of boat dock size regulation, it is an important issue to many people in his district. He said opinions on the subject vary greatly, and he wanted to give people ample opportunity to express their views in public to legislators and DNR staff.

Each legislator in attendance introduced himself and gave a brief overview regarding his interest in and connection to the issue of DNR dock rules. Each one emphasized that they are interested in listening to viewpoints of interested citizens.

Mr. Hovey explained the history of dock regulations leading up to this point. A general permit was issued earlier this year for platforms up 10.5' x 16', or 170 square feet. He mentioned that the DNR has held public input sessions in various parts of the state, and that the DNR is establishing a stakeholder group that will make recommendations for the next general use permit. The stakeholder group consists of people representing lakeshore owners, dock manufacturers, and environmental interests.

Rep. Howes then opened the meeting to comments from the public.

**Those speaking for more regulation of docks:**

**Tom Sheratty** stated he is satisfied with the regulations that were in place last year, but emphasized that the regulations need to be enforced.

**Richard Ward** said that large docks create a form of "sight pollution" on lakes. With larger docks come larger boats, and the cumulative effect is more pollution in the lakes.

**Martin McCleary**, Falcon Heights whose wife is a 5<sup>th</sup> generation lakeshore owner, stated that the regulation without platforms (as it was last year) is good. Some exceptions may be needed, such as for people with disabilities and for commercial purposes.

**Jesse Nix** stated that dock sizes should be minimal.

**Larry Wannebo**, Manhattan Beach, stated that he is in favor of more regulation. He said that it is the natural inclination of people to always want more, and an entitlement attitude with respect to use of public waters has evolved. He stated that “unenvironmental” is also “uneconomical” in the long run.

**Jerry McCauley**, Chair of the Healthy Lakes Committee of the Leech Lake Association, pointed out that the population in the Brainerd Lakes area is projected to increase by 25% - 30% in the next 20 years. With this in mind, it is as important to protect the habitat that extends into the water as it is to protect the shoreline that a person can stand on. He emphasized taking a long term view with respect to the health of our lakes.

**Dan \_\_\_\_\_** (?) Lives in Loon Lake Township. Although he is not a lakeshore owner, he is concerned about groundwater quality. He stated that large docks and platforms inhibit the growth of aquatic plants that act as filtration and contribute water quality. He feels that the DNR needs to be strong on enforcement, and that more regulation is needed.

**John Forney**, past president of the Whitefish Owners Association, said that a lack of education brought us to this point, as very few people know what the rules are. The people need better education and more information. He pointed out that the DNR issued only 12 citations over the last two years for oversized docks. He feels that the DNR doesn't have the resources to deal with dock issues with everything else on their plate.

**Judy Wallschleager**, President of Whitefish Property Owners Association, reaffirmed the points of others who spoke in favor of more regulation.

#### **Those speaking against more regulation of docks:**

**Roger Landsburg**, a lakeshore owner on Gull Lake, just realized this year that he has had a non-conforming dock for 18 years. Mr. Landsburg presented schematics of various docks to show how current regulations allow significantly more total square footage in some instances compared to others.

**Russell Larson**, who lives on Big Sandy Lake feels that there are enough regulations on the books, and that more regulations are not needed. He stated that dock size is a minor issue compared to others that should demand our attention such as phosphorus runoff and invasive species.

**Don Vandermay**, who owns property on Lake Minnewawa, also stated that no further regulation is needed. He said that in some instances it does the lake justice for people to

have a dock with a platform, if the alternative is to make a place to enjoy the shore by mowing right down to the water.

**Maria Landsburg**, a lakeshore owner on Gull Lake said that a dock is a family gathering place. She said that her dock platform provides a family gathering place, and has provided her with the ability to keep the shoreline natural.

**Paul Schroeder**, Lakeshore owner on Lower Hay Lake and President of the Whitefish Chain Association, stated that a dock is the only access that a property owner has to the lake regardless of whether the shoreline is steep or flat. In the long history of his involvement with his group, he has never had a complaint about docks.

**Larry Nearin**, lakeshore owner on Little Pine Lake stated that the lakeshore owners on his lake monitors the types of docks on their lake and is more restrictive than the DNR. They also initiate policies such as banning phosphorus fertilizer and establishing a 100-foot “no-mow” zone around the lake.

**Roy Lake** (?), Gull Lake Chain, spoke to the problem of rising property taxes, and increasing regulations that restrict what a property owner can do on his property.

#### **Those representing lake related businesses:**

**Roger Rager** emphasized the importance of including lake related business people in the process.

**Craig Simard**, a boat dock manufacturer, stated that by focusing on platforms we may inadvertently be contributing to more environmental degradation of lakes. He said that on steep shorelines, more restrictive regulations could actually result in more environmental degradation, if the alternative is to clear a place on shore for people to enjoy.

#### **Others who spoke:**

**Ron Meyer**, Whitefish Property Owners Association, said that he wasn't aware of the specifics of the DNR rules pertaining to docks until recently. He feels that focusing on platforms will result in piecemeal rules.

**Marilyn Olefs**, lakeshore owner on Trout Lake, said that the length of the dock is more important than focusing on the platform. She pointed out that canopies that block the view of the lakeshore should also be of concern.

Rep. Howes and Mr. Hovey both emphasized that all points of view will be considered when the DNR adopts the next general permit later this year.

Rep. Howes expressed his thanks to audience members for attending the meeting.

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