

Appendix J: Responses to Comments Received at Public Forums

After the draft report was made public, forums were provided where the draft recommendations were presented and member of the public could provide comments and ask questions. Forums were held on April 4, 2011 in the Southbury Town Hall and on April 6, 2011 at the Midtown Campus of Western Connecticut State University. Comments were recorded and reviewed by the Task Force. Those comments and responses to those comments are provided below.

Public Comments / Task Force Responses

1. **Comment:** Consideration should be given for State ramps to be manned at all times or closed when they are not manned.

Response: CT DEEP is increasing coverage at its ramps as budget allows and will supplement coverage to the best of its ability using the Invasive Investigators. US Fish and Wildlife provides funds to operate and maintain State ramps with the stipulation that it is for public access which precludes locking them up.

There is also considerable access to the lakes that is not via State launch and that creates an equity issue. There is a misassumption that the State ramps are only used by transient boaters. Actual State launch ramp usage is a mix of local and transient boaters. Local boaters use the state ramps as a matter of convenience. On the recent Memorial Day weekend Invasive Investigators noted that two-thirds of the boats at the launch were local boats. Transient boaters may present a risk if

they are going from lake to lake. However, a greater risk may be from the local boater using municipal, commercial or community ramps, who goes over to Lillinonah or Zoar and returns to Candlewood or other uninfected lakes.

2. **Comment:** Use the Invasive Investigators to supplement Boating Education Assistants (BEAs) at the State ramps.

Response: The CT DEEP is increasing coverage at its ramps as budget allows and intends to supplement coverage using the Invasive Investigators. They have agreed to staff the boat launches with BEAs at Lakes Lillinonah and Zoar from 6am to 8pm on weekends and holidays to educate boaters about the problems associated with zebra mussels and the responsibility and power they have to prevent the spread; they are also planning to have BEAs and Invasive Investigators at the State launches on Candlewood Lake. Invasive Investigators have begun assist-

ing at State launches as scheduling permits. Numbers of trained Invasive Investigators will need to be increased in order to have better lake wide coverage. Volunteer launch monitoring has proven nationwide to be a most valuable component of prevention and control efforts; and we will continue to promote and develop this aspect of our program in our local communities. The numerous launch sites on Candlewood Lake make this aspect of our outreach efforts of prime importance for the prevention and control of zebra mussels and all aquatic nuisance species.

3. **Comment:** Tournaments should consider paying for a CT DEEP person to inspect all vessels participating in an event out of the fees collected.

Response: The tournament fishing community is currently subject to and adhering to more prevention measures than the other user groups, e.g. CT DEEP's Inland Fisheries Division's self-certification and the Connecticut Bass Federation Nation's internal self-certification programs. In addition, CT DEEP Inland Fisheries Division does not have the statutory authority to charge for permits other than Scientific Collector's permits.

4. **Comment:** What are recreational boating user groups being asked to do other than the tournament fishing community which is being asked to have all participating members self-certify before a tournament?

Response: The CT DEEP Boating Division is incorporating self-certification into boating/marine events permits (e.g. regatta permits) and also piloting a self-certification program for all boaters using the State ramps on Candlewood this summer. Invasive Investigators are handing out self certification slips to boats, to be completed and handed in the next time they launch, as a method of reinforcing the "Clean-Drain-Dry" decontamination procedures and as an aid to emphasizing aquatic nuisance species prevention and awareness.

5. **Comment:** Those registering for a municipal slip or use of ramp should receive information about zebra mussels and other invasives at time of registration (Monroe model).

Response: Sherman, New Milford, and New Fairfield have marinas and the managing Park and Recreation Offices have the information and are providing it to those with a slip. Although Brookfield and Danbury do not have municipal slips they do have ramps. Those Park and Recreation Departments have received the materials as well and will be providing it to those that use the ramp. The Task Force will ensure that similar steps are being taken at the municipal ramps on Lake's Lillinonah and Zoar. This recommendation will be added to the report.

6. **Comment:** A boat sticker program should be considered to generate funding for aquatic invasive species prevention and control.

Response: A CT State sponsored boat sticker program would need to be statewide in scope for the DEEP to adopt. It could not be developed to exclude a specific user group. The revenues would need to be earmarked specifically for invasive species prevention and control by making it a contribution for the purpose of aquatic nuisance species control. Any boat sticker program developed must be carefully worded to protect the revenues for this purpose.

7. **Comment:** Out of state boaters are “low hanging fruit.”

Response: The risk of introduction via the out of state boater has been at Lakes Candlewood, Lillinonah and Zoar for many years. The importance of our educational outreach efforts cannot be overstressed. The new signage alerts are intended to educate and warn boaters of the risks posed by zebra mussels. Candlewood is a prime recreational lake visited by boaters of the tri-state area. We recognize the opportunity and importance that better educational outreach and increased public awareness plays in prevention and control. The only new aspect is the presence of zebra mussels at Lakes Lillinonah and Zoar, which is why CT DEEP is adding additional staff there. This is a nationwide problem and we all must do our part to promote responsible boating habits and help control and prevent the spread of zebra mussels.

8. **Comment:** We need to give the local FirstLight personnel the political clout to help persuade corporate management to invest in resolving the problem.

Response: The Task Force has conveyed to FirstLight the need to develop ways of better accepting public comment and developing communications with the public.

9. **Comment:** FirstLight should be asked to modify operations to preclude veliger-infested waters from being pumped up, i.e. fill Candlewood before waters reach 50°F and stop pumping for remainder of season.

Response: FirstLight Power was asked and has modified operations at Rocky River. They have temporarily suspended pumping water up to Candlewood Lake and have proposed a zebra mussel monitoring program for their Rocky River, Bulls Bridge, and Falls Village facilities.

10. **Comment:** FirstLight should be asked to invest in a system to filter or treat (e.g. sodium hypochlorite) incoming water at Candlewood Lake.

Response: Due to the mesh size required to filter our zebra mussel veligers and the amount of silt and sediment in the Housatonic River, a filtration system is not viable solution to preventing introduction into Candlewood Lake. Any chemical solution requires permitting, and physical features (e.g. chemical

storage tank, plumbing, injection scheme, etc.). Permitting, planning and development would require considerable time.

11. **Comment:** Massachusetts should be asked to fix the pipe and “outflow” at Laurel Lake.

Response: The State of MA has no legal basis of compelling the owner of the pipe to plug or repair it. At a meeting with the CT Attorney General’s office it was determined that there was no legal mechanism to compel MA to stop the flow of veligers into the Housatonic River. It is possible that some pressure can be put on this problem from a federal level, but it is still under review.

12. **Comment:** What benefit does the work of the Task Force have for those beyond Candlewood, Lillinonah and Zoar? Education and outreach efforts should be expanded south of Zoar and Lillinonah to include Lake Housatonic as well. In addition, education efforts should be expanded north of Candlewood

to include users of the Housatonic River upstream.

Response: While the CLA and Task Force do not have the resources to expand its scope beyond its current reach, we are willing to share anything we develop to help out others facing the similar problems. The CLA and Task Force have created a considerable amount of good information and a model of how a community can respond to the threat of aquatic nuisance species. The Housatonic Valley Association has offered to provide the information developed by the Task Force beyond the Candlewood-Lillinonah-Zoar boundaries. The work done by the CLA and Task Force has been a collaborative, multi agency and stakeholder effort. We have benefitted by the cooperative input and support of experienced professionals across our nation, who have contributed their expertise and research to help further our efforts. In this vein we also intend to make our education and outreach data files available for the protection of other waterbodies.