

Report: Date August 24, 2004

The August meeting was held at the Washington Diner. A pasta dinner was served prior to meeting at a nominal cost to the delegates. Our thanks to the proprietors for the hospitality extended to our Council. All stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll of Clubs, Delegates, Officers and Guests.

Foothill's Sportsmen	Clyde Breakell	NW Rod & Gun	Bill Solon
Goshen Sportsmen	Tom Accousti	“ “	Gary Ruthier
Woodbury/ Southbury R&G	Phil Mauriello	Olde Newgate Coon	Elise Mauriello
Waterbury F&G	Jerry Ciarcia	Sharon R&G	Jim Fedorich
NWCSA	Peter Gray	NVBC	Chris Marino
CT Classic Bucks	Dean Fraley	Harwinton R&G	Mike Fusco
Bell City Rifle	Dominic Basile	New Preston R&G	Craig Nelson

Officers in attendance: President, Chris Marino and Treasurer, Clyde Breakell. **Guests** included Washington First Selectman Richard Sears and several Washington residents.

Lake Waramaug Agreement Discussion:

We began this meeting with an introduction of Washington First Selectman Richard Sears. We than introduced each of our delegates, the clubs they represent and towns they hail from. We wanted Mr. Sears to know that the sportsmen of this state do not consider the proposed Lake Waramaug Agreement; between the DEP and the Towns of Washington, Warren, and Kent a local issue.

Mr. Sears was given the floor to make a statement and give an overview of the Lake Waramaug Agreement. He introduced himself and gave some personal background. He than recited a ten year history involving public boating issues on the lake. He spoke about the extremes of views that have been expressed regarding the lake, quoting Senator Roraback and DEP Deputy Commissioner David Leff as saying “This is the public’s lake. The people of Connecticut own this lake, they own everything except for the private property, and we will open this.” The extremes ranged from what Mr. Sears termed “unlimited openness. DEP was promising in the past, or threatening” as Mr. Sears understands it, (he was not involved in any negotiations at that time) “We are going to have 85 boats a day, we are going to put in a ramp at the northwest corner, at the state park, and we are going to protect the environment by checking the invasive species and everything is going to be fine. And, what do you think of that, Washington Warren and Kent?”

Mr. Sears went on to state that for various reasons, the state could not be trusted to keep its promises regarding inspections and maintenance. That was the concern of folks who want to keep the lake environmentally healthy. He than stated that the three towns have spent tens of thousands of dollars, perhaps millions of dollars in **public money**, “to pump the air into the lake, work with the Lake Waramaug Task Force, work with private owners, that was public money where the three towns around the lake have said we want to keep this lake clean and keep the invasives out. They have been working deliberately on that for many, many years.”

Mr. Sears explained the perceived benefits of the new agreement as essentially unlimited access for car-top boats and motors of up to 12HP. “They would have to be inspected. No limit to the number of those boats.” And then there is a limit to twenty motor-powered boats a day of people who are not residents of the three towns. Thirteen of those slots are limited to at least double day campers at the State Park, seven would be called day boaters, everything has to be inspected, there will be a fee and they will be on and off the lake through the Washington Boat Ramp. The only public access according to this agreement will be managed by the Town of Washington”. The three

Washington selectmen all agree that the Town of Washington is willing to do the controls, do the inspection, and control the ramp. Mr. Sears states that “this is a compromise; it allows public access; limited as it is, but it protects the lake and that’s of great concern to many people.” All three towns must vote to approve this agreement.

We then proceeded to engage Mr. Sears in a general discussion of the agreement. Chris Marino led off by asking Mr. Sears who actually represented the general statewide public during the recent negotiations and who compromised for the public at these meetings? His answer: “As I understand it, I came in November and started up with the DEP probably the past seven to nine months. Nobody was at that table at that point. It was Jack Travers representing the public of Warren, So, it wasn’t beyond the public of the three towns around the lake. Did not represent, and that’s what Dean said to me, you know you (the public) never had a voice.”

And so the conversation went: The Lake Waramaug interest groups did very little compromising, and the citizens of Connecticut, who are responsible for the cleanup of this lake and its current condition, were left out of the negotiations. The DEP is perceived by the towns as incapable of managing Lake Waramaug, and the health of the lake is dependent upon severely limiting non-resident, public use. The convoluted and impractical structure of the agreement has been designed to ensure the least amount of non-resident, public participation.

By the time this report is issued, the three towns will have ratified the Agreement. The citizens of Connecticut, and especially outdoor recreationalists, will suffer the loss of a major state lake without forewarning or public participation in the process.

We thank Mr. Sears and the several residents who joined us for this meeting. Mr. Sears was candid in his comments regarding the Lake Waramaug issue, and that is appreciated. It remains to be seen what can be done to reinstate the public interest regarding Lake Waramaug. We have sent letters to the Attorney General’s Office and to the Governor.

Return to Regular Business:

Council Report: The report was distributed to all delegates. Motion to accept the report as written was approved.

Financial Report: Clyde reports checks issued to: Christenson Networks for netting donation to the Burlington Hatchery: \$1533.92. The Goshen Agricultural Society, \$125.00 for insurance for our Council Booth at the Goshen Fair. **Note:** The Goshen Ag Society waived the normal \$330.00 booth fee for our non-profit organization and have our thanks for the generosity extended: Check issued for \$250.00 to the Ruffed Grouse Society for our annual sponsorship membership: Check issued to RGS, Hartford Chapter to reserve a Council table at the September 17th banquet in Bristol: Outing report under committees.

Motion to accept the financial report made and approved.

Correspondence: None.

Committees:

Rapid Response Committee:

We continue to work on the Lake Waramaug issue. At this point the best we can hope for is intervention from the Attorney General’s Office or from the Governor. To that end, letters have been submitted to both offices regarding our concerns over this agreement and the manner in which it was arrived at.

Membership:

We welcomed Bill Solon and Gary Ruthier from the Northwest Rod & Gun Club to this meeting. Bill and Gary will be serving as delegates from Northwest and intend to be active with Council meetings.

Council Outing:

Chris Marino reported expenses and income for our first Council Outing, held August 28th at the Torrington fish & Game Association.

All expenses to date total \$520.00 . Outing income for ticket sales and a small raffle totaled \$1170.00. Gross profit totaled \$690.00. We also sold 19 ATV tickets at the Outing for another \$190.00. **Phil motions, “ to pay Clyde \$150.00 for the hog he provided at the outing”.** **Mike Fusco seconds. Discussion. Motion approved.**

Jim Fedorich motions to: “authorize Clyde to pay all Outing bills.” Second. Discussion. Approved.

Burlington Hatchery Project:

All materials to cover the raceway and two ponds are now on hand at the hatchery. The hatchery manager is going to instruct several Council Group leaders in constructing the network and we will be asking for volunteers soon to do the work.

The Council was informed that a call had come in to Chris Marino from the Hatchery Manager Dave Zadrosny. Our initial donation of \$15333.92 paid for the netting; however, Dave had forgotten to mention that he would need 40 pressure treated 4X4 studs to frame the raceway and ponds. Chris ordered the additional material and paid for it. Cost was \$533.80. **Jim Fedorich motions “that the Council reimburse Chris Marino the additional expense for lumber” Seconded. Discussion. Approved.**

We are looking into the possibility of helping the hatchery further by providing electric power from the main building to the various pond sites on the east side. Part of the available water supply is from surface stream flow. This water source deteriorates as the weather warms and fish raised in stream fed ponds are highly stressed. Without electric power, the hatchery personnel try to maintain water quality through use of gas powered aerators; but this is a poor substitute for more portable and reliable electric powered equipment.

Ultimately, a few new wells would solve much of the problem and this solution is being pursued. New wells are expensive and subject to regulatory procedures. They will come in time; but for now, we will see what we can do to help solve the immediate problems.

ATV Raffle:

We have arranged to display the ATV at the Goshen Fair. Volunteers have been organized to man our booth throughout the weekend.

Banquet:

Our prize committee was informed that Phil and Elise Mauriello have donated a new Mini-Kota electric trolling motor for the banquet. Dean asked for a list of all prizes to date. We ask all delegates to keep in mind any opportunities for raffle or auction items.

Web Site:

We have been working with the site fort important announcements and dates. Anyone can keep up with schedules and meetings by referring to the site. Our NWCSC written response to the 2004 DEP Wildlife Regulation Proposals is posted on the Issues section of the web site.

CAC: No August meeting.

Old Business:

Discussion of **Council Outing.** Outing held at Torrington Fish & Game on August 29th. Nine local legislators attended, including Senator Roraback. Deputy DEP Commissioner David Leff attended with his eleven-year-old son Josh. RGS Biologist Paul Kaczmaczyck attended along with several Litchfield County landowners. Foresters Jim Gillespie and several DEP personnel also attended. We had 85 to 90 people attend this event. Except for some delay in cooking the pig, the event went well and everybody seemed to have a good time. The club skeet field proved to be a big attraction with all legislators but one shooting. We had originally planned to close the field at 1:30PM, but our guests kept the field busy until 5PM.

We displayed the Torrington F&G plan for conservation and development that was drawn up by Jim Gillespie, which included maps and diagrams of the proposed management plan. We took legislators and guests on tours of the club to show the work that has already been accomplished including day lighting cuts, clearcuts, and grassland management. The visual aids and tours were used to emphasize and illustrate the theme of our Outing: that our various land-owning clubs represent one of the best open space resources in Northwest Connecticut. The citizens of our state benefit from the fact that our clubs own and manage thousands of acres of woodlands, croplands, and grasslands; with no direct cost to taxpayers, while paying property taxes to the towns in which they are located. Our legislators were impressed with this concept and we hope they will see our clubs as the assets to the communities that they are. Our clubs represent the best land trust the state has, and this fact should receive recognition at all levels of government and society.

We want to thank all of our delegates who participated and made this first outing a success.

DEP Ruffed Grouse Survey:

Biologist Mike Gregonis is heading up this new state inquiry into the status of Grouse. We have submitted the results of our informal Council Surveys conducted over the past several years. Mike paid Chris Marino a visit in response to that informational letter, and shared some of his plans for the survey, information regarding survey results from contiguous states, and some of his own speculation as to what is happening with Connecticut's Grouse population.

This new effort is welcome news from the Wildlife Division, and we commend the agency for instituting this program. Chris offered the services of our northwest sportsmen when needed. This project, along with the activities of the Connecticut Woodcock Council should prove very helpful in identifying and correcting the causes of decline for all wildlife species dependent on successional habitat.

Muzzle Loader Rifle Turkey Hunting:

This proposal was discussed, with new information brought to light in the Wildlife Regulation proposal. DEP is planning to advance the opening of the fall firearms turkey season to the first Saturday in October, with the season closing at the end of October. Previously, all of our efforts have been focused on the spring season. However, a fall opening several weeks before the general small game season presents an opportunity to introduce a primitive hunt during a time of low hunter density. We have made a proposal and await a response from the agency.

Less than half the number of hunters purchase fall turkey tags as compared to the spring season and not many turkeys are harvested. That being the case, we think that the muzzleloader proposal could be incorporated in the fall season without inconvenience to shotgun hunters.

Dean Fraley reports that the town of New Milford has approved bow hunting on town owned land. Call Dean for details. Dean also reported that the Steep Association has decided not to allow hunting on their land citing insurance carrier prohibitions as the reason.

New Business:

Chris reported on the New Haven based Animal Activists of CT organization. The web site for this animal rights group cites efforts to lobby the two state representatives on the Governor's Committee to select a new DEP Commissioner. The group is trying to influence the selection committee to pick an animal rights candidate for this position. This may not seem all that serious a threat to sportsmen; but it should be noted that there is no direct sportsman representation on the selection committee; and we are told there will be no public comment allowed on the final candidates. The next DEP Commissioner will have a major influence on all outdoor recreation activity for many years. It is unfortunate that one of the largest state constituency groups will not have any representation in the selection process.

Good of the Council:

Adjourn: 10:30PM