Buoys, Patrols Return to Otsego Lake Soon

OTSEGO LAKE

A new enforcement coverage, and therefore the 250-foot no-wake zone buoys, will return to the waters of Otsego lake in the near future.

An agreement has been reached between the Otsego County Sheriff's Department and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation that will restore the police presence to last year's levels. The sheriff will provide five hours of lake time per week, and the DEC six.

According to Otsego Lake Association officials, who had lobbied the county Board of Representatives to restore the funding for the program and met with DEC officials, the return of patrols solves the liability insurance roadblock that would have allowed the Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District to take possession of the buoys. The floating markers delineate a wakeless zone 200 feet from the shoreline, which is intended to slow the release of phosphorus into the lake from shoreline erosion.

The new defunct Watershed Council had owned the buoys, and when the coverage expanded, no group would take possession.

"We owe a debt of gratitude to both Sheriff Don Mundy and to Acting Captain Tim Duffy of the DEC," OTA President Robert Elsenhofer said. "The association is also grateful to Bob Banta and other Lake Association members for their efforts to bring this agreement to fruition."

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Buoy Health of Lake should be priority

The Town of Springfield has a long-standing but largely unenforced rule that its public landing is for residents only. Only well after Springfield turned down an offer for a power washer and decided against having a private dock to rent to locals, west citizens did they tighten up their rule by issuing ID cards to properly identified residents. This approach was taken even though the Town Board's attorney had advised using stickers to be affixed to resident boats or trailers. The potential for abuse of the card system was apparent, and has come to pass. Some Town officials have misused the cards by making them available to non-Springfield friends.

For Springfield's officials to be involved in such anony is an insult to residents whose taxes support the dock building, personnel and maintenance of public landing. Worn yet, it opens the door to potential lake infection by exotic. I find this situation appalling as both a taxpayer and leader of an association whose agenda is implementing the Lake Management Plan, which Springfield agreed to. That Plan states that signatures to the Plan should "maximize efforts to prevent the introduction of exotic species into the lake."

The health of Otsego Lake must not be compromised by official inaction and neglect. The lake is the region's crown jewel and every effort must be made to keep it that way. A secure sticker system and more coverage involving inspection and a required boat wash if necessary would make Springfield a meaningful partner in the effort to protect Otsego Lake.

Bob Elsenhofer
President
The Otsego Lake Association