

# Consultants Unveil Draft Plan For Lakes' Watershed

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Beacon staff

The Webster-Highland Lake Watershed Partnership's consultants presented their first draft of a watershed management plan in an often-contentious meeting at AE/MS on August 31. The plan, which aims to improve the water quality of Webster Lake and protect Highland Lake from future water-quality problems, drew praise from some attendees and sharp criticism from many others.

[The gist of the 58-page plan is contained in its two-page Executive Summary, which appears on page 5 of this issue of the Beacon. You should first read that (or the plan itself) in order to understand the rest of this article.]

The meeting handout (which, along with the plan, is available on the WHLWP Web site at Webster-HighlandLakesPartnership.org) proposed reducing pollutants through "feasible measures" in these categories:

- Residential growth
- Pasture and manure management
- Timber harvesting
- Road runoff
- Shoreline and on-lake activities
- Education and outreach

Among the 32 recommended measures in those categories, the ones with the most obvious impacts in Andover were:

- update our zoning ordinances based on the Build-Out Analysis that the

Master Plan Update committee is working on

- consider a Lake Protection Zoning District along the lines of the one that Franklin already has
- consider a Lake Watershed Protection District to regulate forestry and other activities
- continue to work with land trust organizations to promote conservation easements and other land protections for undeveloped land around the lakes
- work with "major farm owners" to install additional fencing to keep livestock away from drainages
- incorporate in local ordinances buffer setbacks for manure applications
- work with farm owners to develop up-to-date manure management plans
- stabilize and reinforce the roadside swales along Sam Hill Road

A number of people at the meeting were bothered by what Wood Sutton, an alternate on Andover's Planning Board, called the plan's "shotgun" approach. They felt the plan should identify the specific sources of the phosphorus that's causing the problem in Webster Lake and specifically address that problem. Dennis Fenton, Chairman of Andover's Board of Selectmen, said to the consultants, "You guys are going all around the problem and not hitting it directly."

In response, the presenters consis-

tently pointed out that the pollution comes from "non-point sources." One of the consultants, Bill Arcieri of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, said, "It's a number of sources, it's a variety of things. It's not just one septic system, it's not just one area, it's not just one activity. We've got to hit every one of the sources."

Another contentious point was how much of the problem comes from Sucker Brook. Bill said that 75% of Webster Lake's water comes from Sucker Brook, and 67% of the phosphorus in the lake comes from Sucker Brook.

Armand Boisvert of Andover raised the question of whether Sucker Brook is really the problem. According to Armand, "You're expecting Andover to solve Webster Lake's problem. The water coming from Sucker Brook has less percent of phosphorus in it than is already in Webster Lake. That tells me that you're looking in the wrong place."

"We've had farming and logging for hundreds of years," Armand continued. "In fact, there's less now than ever. But we didn't have pollution problems then. We got pollution problems when we built houses all around the lake, and they're not camps anymore but year-round houses, and they don't have adequate septic systems. You're trying to get upstream to take care of it for you."

There was also considerable discussion of the impact of forestry in the watershed and the laxity of enforcement

of good logging practices. Jim Hersey, who helps his brother, Jerry Hersey, on the Hersey Family Farm on Route 11, expressed the opinion that the cost of the Town hiring a forester to plan and monitor good logging practices should be a cost that gets passed through to the landowner, not borne by the taxpayer. This would be the same way that engineering costs mandated by the Town are borne by the land developer. The meeting discussed other ways that local ordinances can impact logging practices and how the costs of enforcement could be handled.

The rest of the discussion ranged widely, from the chemistry of organic phosphorus, to the cost (prohibitive) of connecting all the residences around Webster Lake to a public sewer system, to the possibility of municipalities legislating watershed protections that the state hasn't been willing to.

The meeting closed with promises that all the points raised would be considered as the consultants work on the final draft. The tentative plan is to have the final draft ready for presentation in mid-October. When a date has been set it will be posted on the WHLWP Web site at Webster-HighlandLakesPartnership.org, on the Beacon's Web site at AndoverBeacon.com, and on the Channel 8 Bulletin Board. In the meantime, you can comment on the draft plan on the WHLWP Web site.

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