

Topic: Wabamun Lake Ad Hoc Committee – Update

Introduction:

This report provides background information and possible solutions regarding a number of immediate issues at Lake Wabamun including:

- Need for a South side temporary boat launch to be operational for the 2017 season
- Better management and control of undeveloped lake access points
- Identification of nutrient loading controls
- Education and awareness of these issues and work being done to address them by Lake Wabamun municipalities

Facts (Background Information):

The south side of Wabamun Lake is lacking a formalized boat launch, with the current informal access points being the only means of access. Rather than driving around the lake to the two existing launches, boaters typically will access the lake through these informal access points, which are seeing increasing pressure being placed upon them.

In 2013, Parkland County initiated the Wabamun Boat Launch Study. The results of that study identified a number of key recommendations for consideration. The first two recommendations dealt with expanding and enhancing the two formal boat launches on the north side of Wabamun Lake; the third dealt with formalizing access controls at the undeveloped access points. The fourth recommendation suggests a new formal launch be developed on the south side of Wabamun Lake to take the pressures off the other formal and informal access points. This was identified as a long-term recommendation, to be considered within 10 – 20 years. However, due to the recent closing of the Village of Seba Beach's boat access point and the resulting added pressures faced at the informal access points on the south side, combined with the slow progression on the first two recommendations, it was pertinent and necessary to move forward with that initiative as soon as possible.

Council approved funding for Administration to undertake land acquisition and design of the new, permanent boat launch. Current planning and timelines would see acquisition of the land, design and construction resulting in a permanent facility developed and operational in 2019.

In addition the Village of Wabamun is moving forward with upgrades and improvements to their boat launch facility with funding support from Parkland County and the Province of Alberta. The Provincial Park has also expanded parking at their launch facility and is undertaking some improvements to its launch as well.

In the meantime the boat access pressures continue to escalate causing problems in the surrounding Summer Villages, as well as in Parkland County residential areas around the Lake.

An Ad Hoc Committee, made up of representatives from surrounding Lake Wabamun municipalities, Trans Alta, Wabamun Watershed Management Council and the Province has been established to address immediate issues around the lake of which boat access is one. This committee was charged with establishing a temporary boat launch to help address these immediate access issues as well as making recommendations on the management and use of undeveloped access points around the lake, nutrient loading controls and approaches for educating residents around these activities.

Analysis:

1. South Side Boat Launch

Land:

- Worked with Trans Alta and identified two parcels of land as potential sites for Launch/Park site
- Looked at sites for placement of a temporary launch as well as the permanent launch/park
- Assessed both parcels and determined parcel A (attached) more suitable
- Preliminary design needs to be completed to determine land required for launch/park and access road
- Once design is developed Trans Alta and Parkland County can move forward with land discussions/negotiation
- Agreement will be contingent upon Provincial approving project
- Once project is approved subdivision process will occur to complete land acquisitions and transfer

Approvals:

- There are a number of different approvals required for this type of project including approval under the Provincial Lands and Water Acts, Federal Fisheries Act and Navigable Waters Protection Act as well as any municipal requirements.
- In order to obtain these approvals there are various types/levels of assessments and studies required to provide the information to the approving bodies they require to make a decision.
- Administration met with Alberta Environment and Parks approvals staff to discuss the temporary boat access project and whether or not there may be some leniency in terms of assessments and approvals required depending on our construction approach and use of materials to minimize environmental impact
- There is potential for temporary approvals under the Alberta Lands Act; however not under the Water Act. The Water Act focusses on the use occurring in the area. In this case, whether it is a temporary or permanent Boat Launch, the use is still the same and the impacts from that use are still the same. Therefore the approvals process must be followed and the appropriate assessments conducted.
- Essentially a full Bio-Physical Assessment will be required. This will include information required by the province regarding bird habitat, with special focus on the Western Grebe which is a threatened species in Alberta. A wetland assessment and a fisheries impact and other assessments are also included.

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- Most of the work that is required for these assessments has to be done in the proper season, meaning the earliest they can begin is spring 2017. They could require 3-5 months to carry out and complete. This, followed by application to the Province and Federal Governments and with their processing time of a minimum 2-4 months, means a temporary launch at this site, ready for next spring, is not feasible.
- Estimated costs for completion of the required assessments and approvals is \$50,000

Design/Costing/Construction:

- A very high level concept design was developed for both temporary boat launch and permanent boat launch to get an idea of the potential siting of the facility, layout and costing
- Access into the site is a challenge and three options for access were identified in the initial assessments and range in costs from \$193,000 to \$395,000
- Temporary launch approximate cost was estimated at \$580,000 (included \$50,000 for Environmental assessments)
- Permanent Launch approximate cost was estimated at \$1.33 million (includes \$50,000 for Environmental Assessments)

Committee Recommendations:

- Move forward with Permanent Boat Launch project
 - o Assessments and approvals required for the temporary launch are the same as those required for the permanent launch project
 - o Timing to complete those assessments and secure approval would be, at the earliest fall of 2017 after next year's boating season
 - o if all the stars align; road development fall of 2017, park design and tender occurring at the end of 2017 with construction beginning in winter of 2018, for phased opening of launch and parking during the 2018 season. The remaining construction of park site to be completed in 2018 for full opening in 2019
- Interim Boat Access to be provided, as it has been, through undeveloped access points

2. Undeveloped Access Points

- Committee considered three options regarding undeveloped access points

Option #1 – Leave As is

Leave all undeveloped access points as they are, continuing to allow Boat and Pedestrian access. Provides time to see if the Southside temporary/permanent boat launch reduces the volume of use and issues in surrounding communities.

Estimated Cost - \$10,000 (at approx. 20 sites)

Impacts:

- Area residents have access
- General public has access

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- Potential for continued issues (traffic, garbage, access, environmental degradation etc.) if launch has little or no impact on undeveloped access point use
- Charging at permanent access may drive users back to the undeveloped points
- Continued Enforcement Services support required to manage parking issues

Option #2 – Block off all Undeveloped Access Points – No Access

Block off all undeveloped access points not allowing any vehicular access only pedestrian access.

Estimated Costs - \$112,000 to \$280,000 (Fence at approximately 20 sites)

Impacts:

- Area residents and general public have no vehicular access
- Area residents and general public have pedestrian access
- No emergency vehicle access
- increased maintenance costs to County for maintaining fencing
- some access points have not encountered any issues and area residents would lose use of them
- supports directions in the Wabamun Lake Subwatershed Land Use Plan

Option #3 – Fence and Gate the undeveloped access points – Allow limited access

Block off all undeveloped access points with fencing and a gate to allow some level of access for area residents.

Estimated Costs - \$172,000 to \$340,000 (fence and gate at approx. 20 sites)

Impacts:

- Area residents have some level of vehicular access
- General public does not have any access
- Emergency vehicles have access
- Increased costs to County in managing and controlling these access points
- Challenge determining level of access, twice per season to allow dock placement which means in some areas back lot owners not having a dock will have no access in the community; or are cards/keys issued to all residents for access whenever meaning County will require resources to control, manage and track keys/cars etc.

Committee Recommendations:

- Option #1 – Leave as is until permanent launch is complete and open for use; then implement Option #3 – Block off all undeveloped access points, limited access
 - o Extensive public engagement program to occur over 2017 to determine best approach for managing and implementing Option #3
 - Areas of concern include backlot boat access, placement of docks and boat lifts

3. Nutrient Loading

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- Several municipalities have put bylaws in place restricting the use of cosmetic fertilizers within a certain distance of the shoreline
- Supports directions made in the Wabamun Lake Subwatershed Land Use Plan

Committee Recommendation:

- That all municipalities surrounding Lake Wabamun develop and implement a Cosmetic Fertilizer Bylaw with the following key components:
 - that the use of cosmetic fertilizers defined as any substance or mixture of substances, containing nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium or other plant food that is manufactured, sold or represented for use as a plant nutrient or aid to plant growth be prohibited within one hundred (100) metres of the shoreline of Lake Wabamun
 - That penalties levied be consistent for all municipalities

4. Awareness/Public Engagement

- Purpose is to inform residents of the issues and what we are doing, collectively, to address them, when and how

Recommendations:

- Two phased Engagement approach:
 - Phase 1
 - Inform public of the issues and what is being done to address them
 - Consult public on the design of the new Boat Launch/Park area and Nutrient loading
 - Phase 2
 - Involve public in discussions around the closure of all undeveloped access points around Lake Wabamun and how it will be managed and implemented to best meet the needs of Lake Wabamun residents and users
 - Costing
 - Public Engagement program needs to be developed for costing to be determined

5. Costing Summary (based on Committee Recommendations)

Area of Focus	Component	Estimated Cost	Budgeted (Parkland County)	Required
Southside Launch/Park	Land	To be negotiated	\$300,000 (2016)	\$0
	Preliminary design	\$50,000	\$50,000 (2016)	\$0
	Environmental Assessments/Approval Package	\$50,000	\$50,000 (2017)	\$0
	Detailed Design, Tender/Construction Management	\$50,000	\$50,000 (2018)	\$0 Potential adjustment to move a portion of the 2018 amount to 2017 to cover detailed design costs.
	Construction	\$1,625,000	\$1,500,000 (2018, 2019)	\$125,000 Numbers to be refined after Preliminary Design is complete, may also be savings related to land costs and costs of assessments
Undeveloped Access Points	Public Engagement Phase 2			
	Option #3	\$340,000	\$0	\$340,000
Nutrient Loading	Public Engagement Phase 1			
Public Awareness	Public Engagement Phase 1	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Public Engagement Phase 2	TBD	TBD	TBD

6. Next Steps – Proposed Timelines

- Next steps and timelines are based on the Committees proposed recommendations:
 - o Dec 2016-April 2017 - Preliminary Design Boat Launch/Park /Phase 1 Public Engagement
 - o Jan 2017 – Land Discussions with Trans Alta; MOU developed regarding land for project
 - o April -June 2017 – Biophysical Assessment
 - o May – August 2017 – Public Engagement Phase 2/Access Road Design
 - o July -Sept 2017 – Application submission and assessment to Prov. and Fed. Departments
 - o September-October 2017 – Access Road Tender/Construction
 - o Oct -Nov 2017 – Land Subdivision process and completion of Land Acquisition for project
 - o Oct-Dec 2017 – Detailed Design/Tender for Launch/Park Construction
 - o Jan 2018 – Award Tender
 - o Jan 2018 – September 2019 – Construction
 - o Open – Partial in 2018, full 2019
 - o Closure of Undeveloped Access Points following completion and opening of Boat Launch; followed by implementation of Management Plan developed as part of Public Engagement Phase 2

*Access road construction could occur in Sept/October if approvals/land process completed early

Alternatives:

Conclusion/Summary:

Administration supports the Committees recommendations. Proposed timelines are aggressive and given the complexity of the process, the timing of environmental assessments, timing required for approvals and the various levels of government involved there maybe adjustments required. Administration will work diligently with our partners to reduce any impacts as much as possible.

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