

4 Mar, 2013

Dear LCA Members,

Greetings and Happy 2013! Save the date for the 2013 Annual Association Meeting and BBQ. The Board has selected the afternoon of June 29, 2013 to hold our annual meeting and picnic. In this newsletter, we will cover both some NID related information as well as some of the takeaways from the member survey we conducted last year.

First, a quick update on the encroachment project that NID has been working on over the past couple of years. As you may know, as part of their project to examine, evaluate and address various encroachments that exist around the lake, they have initially undertaken a surveying project. Presently, they are still doing preliminary work to establish proper reference and control points. Despite the fact you may have seen them around the lake with surveying equipment, they have not actually done any lot line survey work. Commencing within the next couple of months, they will begin the survey of the lot lines that separate NID property from lakefront owner property, lot by lot. I recently spoke with the Chief Engineer of NID, Gary King, who is managing this project. This project is a low priority, so they are using it as a fill project when their surveyors are otherwise unoccupied. Thus, he expects the full surveying process to take approximately five years. They will be starting on the Placer side of the lake. It is unclear whether NID will attempt to set any policy or take any action on any individual encroachments until the surveying is completed. We will keep you informed if we hear anything in this regard.

On the dredging project, we previously informed you that NID has secured virtually all of the environmental approvals it needs to undertake this project. Unfortunately, while NID continues to apply for various grants, it has still not been able to assemble the funds necessary to formally launch the dredging effort. At some point, dredging will become a critical project to maintain the boating utility of the east end of the lake, and it is our hope NID can find a solution to the funding challenges.

One of the biggest concerns NID currently has surrounding their management of Lake Combie relates to the prevention of the Quagga mussel infestation. NID is not only under pressure from various state agencies who are combating the spread of this insidious pest, but it is clear that their water system operations and power generation activities could be seriously impacted if an infestation of any of their water bodies were to occur.

The Board would like to encourage all of you to carefully educate yourselves about this pest because it is clear that responsibility for preventing new infestations really lies with all of us. Why you may ask? It is because the mussel is a hitchhiker. It gets into the bilge systems and onto the trailers of boats that are used in a waterway or water body that is already infested. When the boat is then launched in another water body, the mussels move off the boat or trailer into the water and have successfully begun the process of infesting the second body of water. Do these mussels live forever in the bilge or in a nook on the trailer? No, but depending on the moisture in the air and in the vessel, and the ambient air temperature, they can live for several weeks.

The state has mandated that all lakes implement some sort of boat inspection process to prevent the spread of this pest. Normally, this is reasonably easily implemented by having mandatory inspections of each boat that is launched at the public launch facilities on each lake. Most public lakes have limited numbers of launch ramps that provide convenient choke points for vessel entry. However, for smaller lakes such as Combie that have no centralized launch ramp, or remote lakes with no supervision, alternative approaches are necessary.

Confronted with the range of issues around this pest, NID initially considered limiting each dock to one boat. Several members of our board patiently worked with NID to understand the ineffectiveness of this approach, and appear to have convinced them to take a different approach, which involves self-inspection and community policing. The state permits self-inspection under certain circumstances and this appears to be an applicable situation. It will be critical for everyone launching boats into the lake to become familiar with the pests and ways to avoid their introduction. If you are only taking your boat in and out of Combie, and not trailering it elsewhere (ANY OTHER BODY OF WATER), there is no need for you to be concerned. However, if you take your boat elsewhere, upon reintroducing it to Combie there are protocols that should be followed. You must first thoroughly clean your boat, empty all water from the bilge and any bait boxes, and not launch it back into Combie until it has dried out fully. The state offers a table of safe times based on temperatures. During the summer, this can be a period of one or two weeks. Prior to launch, you must perform a thorough inspection of the boat (including any areas in which mussels could survive, including the bilge area) and the trailer, to verify no standing water or moist areas remain. NID is continuing work on a standardized process in coordination with County ordinances which are being enacted. It is likely that some sort of self-inspection form will need to be filled out and carried on the boat. The LCA board will continue to work with NID to make this process both effective and as unintrusive as possible for the lake residents.

Last year, we circulated an online survey of LCA members to get some input on how we should think about the LCA objectives, strategy and activities going forward. Thank you to those of you who participated in this survey. We had a total of 43 respondents, or about one-third of current lake access homeowners, which is a higher response rate than that of most surveys. The median period of access to the lake from respondents was about 15 years, which means that many of the respondents have had very long term access. Most respondents were married or in a domestic partnership, and just over half have children living in their household, with the large majority of children at least high school age (yes we are an aging population). Half of the respondents were full time residents and half were part timers. Half the respondents could also be classified as “regular” users of the lake, and a very high percentage use the lake for a variety of recreational pursuits. 95% of respondents consistently maintain their membership in the LCA, and if you are one of these respondents, I sincerely thank you for your consistent support of the LCA.

As to the substance of the questionnaire, we did get some good information. Over 90% of respondents indicated they value LCA’s monitoring of the NID activities as the most important reason for membership, with about two thirds indicating they value the propane discount program and half also indicating some level of interest in social activities. With respect to the propane discount program, we asked if there were other services the LCA could provide to enhance membership value, and there were no suggestions related to vendor programs or services (unfortunately, but we remain open to entertaining anyone’s ideas here). A full 95% of members thought the annual dues were either reasonable or too low. Suggestions around LCA activities included improving the member forum, improving the website and holding a lake cleanup prior to Memorial Day. The most consistent suggestion did revolve around the online forum. People would like to see it expanded significantly to enhance communication amongst members (and member to the general board), contain a lost and found, a swap or sale section, sports activities, etc. While several suggested the LCA should maintain a social agenda, the strength of conviction here was less than we would have hoped. Nonetheless, it appears that at the very least, a forum could be used as a means to stimulate more social activities on an informal basis.

Although just over half of the respondents attended the annual picnic this past year, well over half of the respondents who did not attend cited a calendar conflict. It is clear the annual picnic is a tradition we should continue, and we will attempt to improve its scheduling, relevance, social

content and general fun factor going forward. Hence, we have moved the date back in order to avoid any conflicts with graduations and the like.

Finally, on the subject of involvement in the LCA Board, there are a few people who raised their hand. We will be following up with you if you are one of those that gave us contact information, and thank you in advance for your willingness to be involved. It is clear to me that we need broader participation in this Association, both active, and membership level, if it is to be relevant in the long term as presently structured. The Board will be evaluating during the first half of this year various organizational alternatives to try to address the challenges associated with maintaining organizational momentum and increasing the relevance of the LCA.

One of the challenges we have is in the area of communications. The board wants to, and has elected to, move completely to electronic communications. In other words, we will only be communicating through e-mail and the website. It is too expensive and labor intensive for the board to communicate through snail mail, particularly given that we are entirely a volunteer based organization. We are committed to reducing expenses and making the most productive use of your dues. If you are aware of any neighbors, friends or relatives that may not be receiving this communication and should be, we would greatly appreciate your assistance in getting them a copy of this letter.

Lastly, we appreciate those of you who have supported the LCA by paying your membership. Having said that, we would welcome any ideas to achieve increased participation and membership. We believe increased participation is essential to: 1) Providing the LCA Board with an appropriate mandate to represent the interests of the homeowners at large around the lake; 2) Helping to grow the reserve fund of the LCA which we would use for legal, environmental or other expenses in the event of a serious challenge to our normal enjoyment of the lake; and 3) Building a cohesive community around the lake.

All the best,

Ron Codd
President, LCA