

Deep Creek Lake Policy and Review Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: July 27, 2026

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Garrett College Performing Arts Center

Board Members in Attendance:

- Bob Browning, Chairman
- Patty Manown Mash, Chamber of Commerce
- Marta Schroyer, Member
- Jim Iden, Maryland Bass Federation
- Wendel Beitzel, Member
- Ryan Savage, Commissioner
- Jim Hinebaugh, Delegate
- Bob Hoffman, Representing Senator McKay
- Bob Sutton, Property Owners Association

Other Attendees:

- Cristina Sanders, DCL Lake Management, Lake Manager
- Sarah Milbourne, Western Regional Manager, MPS
- Steve Green, PRB Regulatory Committee
- Morgan France, Watershed Foundation
- Parker Jacobs, PRB Regulatory Committee
- Amanda Hathaway, DCL Lake Management
- Barry Weinburg, PRB Regulatory Committee
- Anna Cullen, Deep Creek Lake Management
- Alex Rodman, DCL Lake Management
- Dakota Knott, DCL Lake Management
- Bruce Michael, County Government (online)
- Rebekah Sanner, DCL Lake Management
- Molly Ramsey, County Government Watershed Coordinator
- Tom Parham, Resource Assessment Services, MD DNR (online)
- Carrie Decker, Watershed and Climate Services, MD DNR (online)
- Members of the public

Meeting Summary:

The Policy and Review Board addressed key regulatory, operational, and environmental updates for Deep Creek Lake. Regulatory actions included approving fence removal requirements to address non-compliant structures on the Conservation Easement, establishing a two-year removal timeline for all PWC stands, a discussion of allowing floating boathouses which had been previously non-conforming while directing further discussions to establish spatial parameters for Type A docks, and referring electric vessel charging infrastructure guidelines to the PRB Regulatory Committee. On operational matters, the FY 2026 budget reflects a 16 percent increase over FY 2025 expenditures with confirmed revenue of \$895,000.00, alongside ongoing Submerged Aquatic Vegetation management, invasive species inspections, and routine enforcement protocols. Finally, water quality reports indicate good to fair conditions with minor degradation in the southeast, post-dredging surveys at Arrowhead Cove revealed 509 cubic yards of new sediment accumulation from nearby construction, and multi-agency planning continues under Senate Bill 282 (SB0282) alongside public septic education efforts to protect watershed health.

Detailed Minutes

Policy and Review Board Updates:

The PRB Regulatory Committee met on July 23, 2026, to discuss fences on the Conservation Easement (buydown), Personal Watercraft (PWC) Stands, Non-conforming Use Permits, such as boathouses and other nonconforming uses, and future planning regarding electric vessels.

Fences on the Conservation Easement

Lake Manager Cristina Sanders read the section of the Deed of the Conservation Easement (2000) pertaining to fences: *“No building, facility, means of access, fence or other structure shall be permitted on the property, except: (1) pedestrian pathways or stairways constructed with wood, stone, or permeable surfaces of natural materials to provide access to the lake or improvements on the property from the contiguous property (Deed of Conservation Easement 2000).*

It was reported that a limited number of fences had previously been permitted on the Conservation Easement, and an effort is underway to bring all properties into full compliance. The objective is to uphold the legal terms of the easement by prohibiting new fence approvals while establishing an equitable and practical strategy for existing structures.

Following discussion, the Board determined that non-permitted fences must be removed within five years or upon transfer of property ownership, whichever occurs first. However, for

properties that received a permit for their fence, removal is required strictly upon transfer of property ownership rather than within the five-year timeframe.

Bob Sutton made the motion to approve the compliance parameters as presented. The motion passed unanimously with no opposition.

Personal Watercraft (PWC) Stands

A discussion was held regarding the history and rules for Personal Watercraft (PWC) stands. Before 2006, Special Permits allowed PWC stands as temporary structures on the Buffer Strip. However, Lake Management stopped issuing these permits in 2006 due to a rapid increase in unpermitted stands and heavier watercraft, which bypassed the official boat counts used to manage lake capacity. To help move PWCs from the shoreline to docks, a rule was introduced allowing docks to host additional PWCs (for example, a Type A dock with three slips can hold either one powerboat and two PWCs or two powerboats and one PWC, and common docks may add one third more PWC capacity).

Currently, shoreline stands are only allowed for PWCs weighing 500 lbs. or less. It was noted that only two current PWC models and select older models are within this weight limit. As a result, most shoreline stands around the lake are not compliant, supporting the goal of moving all PWCs to docks.

Bob Sutton made the motion to approve the compliance parameters as presented. The motion passed unanimously with no opposition.

Property owners will be given two years to remove the existing stands.

Non-conforming Use Permits

A discussion was held regarding Non-Conforming Use Permits and boathouse regulations. Non-Conforming Use Permits issued when regulations were established in 1988 and 1989 were valid for up to 15 years; all have since expired. Several specific boathouses were reviewed, as some were originally issued Non-Conforming Use Permits while others were not. Lake Management will continue enforcement actions requiring the removal of non-conforming boathouses, including those utilizing rail systems.

Additionally, the discussion addressed floating boathouses, which resemble other permitted structures such as boat canopies and docks with patio areas. It was noted that floating boathouses should only be permitted on properties with a Buffer Strip capable of supporting winter storage, as steep shorelines make winter haul out unfeasible. This issue will be further discussed with the PRB Regulatory Committee to establish specific limitations regarding size and weight for Type A docks.

Electric Vessels

Concerns were raised by a lakefront owner interested in purchasing an electric vessel regarding the current 20-foot setback requirement from the high-water mark. It was noted that the current setback restricts the installation of electric charging infrastructure for private docks. Enforcing the 20-foot setback creates practical challenges because standard EV charging cables are typically limited to 25 feet in length, and longer cables can cause voltage drops, reduced efficiency, and potential safety hazards. This discussion highlighted the growth of emerging technologies and the increasing adoption of electric vessels, underscoring the need to establish a proactive regulatory framework rather than reacting to requests on a case-by-case basis. The Board acknowledged the necessity of addressing these technological shifts for future use while emphasizing that any updated guidelines must strictly comply with National Electrical Code standards. Consequently, the matter was referred back to the PRB Regulatory Committee to evaluate potential exemptions, safety requirements, and technical standards.

Lake Management Updates:

Budget Breakdown

A review of fiscal year expenditures was conducted, comparing FY 2025 to FY 2026 across several key categories:

- Contractual Services for Payroll Related Personnel (Object 02): Expenditures increased from \$131,939.88 in FY 2025 to \$189,603.66 in FY 2026, covering wages, Social Security, and unemployment contributions for seasonal and non-permanent contractual labor.
- Communications (Object 03): Expenditures decreased from \$21,313.25 in FY 2025 to \$9,030.59 in FY 2026, which accounts for postage, mail, office phones, field mobile data, and service fees.
- Travel (Object 04): Expenditures totaled \$1,050.00 in FY 2025 and \$1,655.10 in FY 2026, covering work related travel, professional development training, mileage, lodging, and conference expenses.
- Utilities (Object 06): Expenditures increased from \$6,446.23 in FY 2025 to \$9,566.52 in FY 2026 for electricity and propane or natural gas at state facilities.
- Motor Vehicle and Watercraft Operations (Object 07): Expenditures increased from \$9,729.80 in FY 2025 to \$18,430.10 in FY 2026. This category includes fleet operations, fuel, lubricants, vehicle and boat repairs, and trailer maintenance.
- General Contractual Services (Object 08): Expenditures increased from \$308,248.18 in FY 2025 to \$354,922.44 in FY 2026 for non-personnel service contracts, IT leases,

equipment repairs, trash and sanitation services, heavy equipment rentals, and administrative fees.

- Supplies and Materials (Object 09): Expenditures rose from \$37,861.93 in FY 2025 to \$47,694.45 in FY 2026, covering custodial and building supplies, tools, signage, uniforms, office supplies, and field materials.
- Equipment Replacement (Object 10): Expenditures decreased from \$46,590.00 in FY 2025 to \$12,873.72 in FY 2026, which covers replacement equipment such as high temperature pressure washers used for boat decontamination.
- Equipment Additions (Object 11): Expenditures increased from \$1,007.58 in FY 2025 to \$3,721.65 in FY 2026, covering new equipment acquisitions such as a drainage pump.
- Grants, Subsidies, and Contributions (Object 12): Expenditures increased from \$240,776.45 in FY 2025 to \$291,488.77 in FY 2026 for mandatory pass-through payments and county refunds.
- Fixed Charges (Object 13): Expenditures totaled \$0.00 in FY 2025 and \$135.84 in FY 2026 for standard fixed administrative charges, including licenses and subscriptions.

Overall, the FY 2026 budget reflects a 16 percent increase over FY 2025 expenditures. \$683,000 was released by Resource Assessment Services through a Unit-to-Unit Agreement. These funds are separate from the Lake Management budget and are being used to fund the five-year Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Management Pilot Project. These funds originate from a \$1 million allocation secured by Senator Mike McKay for Deep Creek Lake. FY 2026 revenue was confirmed at \$895,000.00, though it was noted that revenue adjustments may be necessary if operational expenses continue to rise. Additionally, a request was made to provide the Board with the current balance of the reserve fund.

SAV Management and Invasive Species

Three Aquatic Resources Specialists have joined the staff and are currently preparing for SCUBA certification. The Aquatic Resources Specialists are identifying high density vegetation areas suitable for larger scale harvesting, as the initial Harvester Pilot program was insufficient to assess broader cove impacts. A total of 16 Special Permits for SAV management have been issued, consisting of nine benthic mat permits, six raking permits, and one combination raking and benthic mat permit, with zero Harvester permits issued. Before any permit is granted, a staff member conducts an on-site visit to confirm the absence of invasive aquatic vegetation around the applicant's dock, following which the permit is approved.

The Aquatic Resource Specialists also manage four Garrett College students serving as Launch Stewards responsible for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) inspections at the Deep Creek Lake State Park boat ramp. Oversight duties include training stewards on proper boat inspection procedures and data collection forms, managing inspection data downloads, maintaining the

launch steward facility, and conducting regular check-ins. Technicians also perform boat decontaminations if AIS is found. They also work on-call shifts over the weekend and have completed ten decontaminations to date.

Eight hydrilla inspections have been conducted following property owner inquiries. No *Hydrilla* was detected during any of the eight checks, with common native species found including *Elodea canadensis* and *Potamogeton amplifolius*. Property owners were subsequently notified regarding the specific vegetation present, its ecological benefits, and available control options.

Four annual *Hydrilla* treatments are scheduled for sites with confirmed *Hydrilla* presence, specifically Meadow Mountain Cove, Arrowhead Cove, and the small cove adjacent to the Honi Honi. The Aquatic Resources Specialists assist during these applications by managing boat traffic and addressing dock owner questions. Additionally, Aquatic Resource Specialists collect and submit water samples biweekly from June through mid-September for the Cyanobacteria Sampling in Maryland State Lakes program, monitoring two sites within Deep Creek according to established standard operating procedures.

Stormwater Management Initiatives

Stormwater runoff was identified as a large contributor to sedimentation and nutrient inputs within the lake. Effort is currently underway to identify Best Management Practices and practical solutions that lakefront homeowners and other watershed residents can implement to reduce sedimentation.

DCL Regulation Enforcement

It was noted that boating law violations, unsafe conditions, or other safety concerns occurring on the lake should be reported directly to the Maryland Natural Resources Police (NRP) at 410-260-8888. In contrast, Buffer Strip violations fall under administrative jurisdiction and are handled through the Lake Management Office.

Resource Assessment Services:

Water Quality Monitoring & Trend Analysis

Tom Parham presented an update on the evaluation of Deep Creek Lake water quality conducted over the preceding nine months using data collected from 2009 through 2024. The final report is scheduled for completion by September, with preliminary results expected within the coming weeks.

Overall, the water quality of the lake ranges from good to fair condition, with the southeastern region showing slightly more degradation in terms of nutrients, algae, and water clarity

compared to the northwestern region. Full findings are anticipated to be presented at the next scheduled meeting.

DNR Watershed and Climate Services

Deep Creek Implementation Roadmap and Financing Study Report

Carrie Decker and Molly Ramsey presented an overview of Section 35 of Maryland Senate Bill 282 (SB0282), which establishes the General Assembly's legislative intent regarding the Deep Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation Report. This provision directs the re-establishment and updating of the management plan in coordination with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Deep Creek Lake Management, Garrett County, and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). The initiative focuses on reviewing gaps in implementation readiness and evaluating strategic Best Management Practices (BMPs) through cross level planning to address minor declines in overall watershed quality. It was noted that the Watershed Act of 2025 serves as a primary model for watershed restoration framework, with active restoration efforts currently underway across five designated locations.

Key components of the overall project scope include updating water quality monitoring and analysis, conducting a gap analysis for implementation readiness, establishing a prioritized framework for BMP implementation, developing planning level cost estimations, and creating a coordinated implementation and financing strategy. Target priority areas encompass shoreline management, riparian buffers and tree canopy, stormwater management, agricultural practices, and stream and wetland restoration and conservation. Planning level cost calculations are being modeled using the Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool (CAST), and preliminary discussions were held regarding potential funding mechanisms and project timelines.

Deep Creek Lake Watershed Foundation

Bob Hoffman presented an update regarding Goal 9 of the Watershed Management Plan, which focuses on protecting the watershed from the adverse effects of impaired septic systems while ensuring adequate capacity and management for public sewage systems. Current efforts are centered on public education. While the recent online informational session was well structured, attendance remained low.

To expand outreach, a community meeting is scheduled for August 3. The event will feature presentations by biologist Eric Null, who will address the environmental impacts of leaking septic systems on lake water quality, and Craig from the Garrett County Department of Health, who will discuss septic system maintenance, common system failures, regulatory contacts, and alternative systems. Refreshments will be served starting at 5:00 PM, followed by the meeting at 5:30 PM, pre-registration is requested to ensure adequate catering for the free event.

<https://deepcreekwatershedfoundation.org/upcoming-events-garrett-county/>

Garrett County Government:**Dredging Project Update**

Bruce Michael presented the results of a recent bathymetry survey regarding Arrowhead Cove. The data indicated that 509 cubic yards of new sediment have accumulated in the cove since the completion of the January 2024 dredging project, which had previously removed 11,559 cubic yards of material. This newly deposited sediment represents approximately 4.5 percent of the total cove volume over that timeframe. Active construction projects were identified as potential contributing sources, specifically developments near the Dollar General and Royal Farms locations near Arrowhead Run, as well as along the southern shoreline adjacent to Glendale Road.

Public Comment:

A question about the Shoreline Erosion Control wall, the Lake Manager will review and follow up individually.

Final Remarks and Adjournment:

The next meeting will be held at 6:00pm on October 26, 2026, at the Garrett College Performing Arts Center.

The meeting adjourned at 8:06pm