

Deep Creek Lake Policy and Review Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: May 11, 2026

Time: 6:02 PM

Location: Deep Creek Discovery Center

Board Members in Attendance:

- Chairman Bob Browning
- Bob Hoffman
- Bob Sutton
- Jim Iden, Maryland Bass Federation Representative
- Wendell Beitzel
- Berry Weinburg
- Marta Schroyer (online)

Other Attendees:

- Bruce Michael, County Government
- Molly Ramsey, Deep Creek Watershed Coordinator
- Mike McKay (Online)
- Paul Peditto (Online)
- Parker Jacobs, Aquatic Center
- Sarah Milbourne (DNR)
- Grace Armendariz (DNR)
- Rebekah Sanner (DNR)
- Cristina Sanders (DNR)

Meeting Summary:

The Policy and Review Board approved its previous meeting minutes and accepted the majority of the Boat Act Advisory Committee (BAAC) wake boat recommendations, though it voted to retain the current 200-foot distance regulation. Updates were provided on launch ramp educational signage, the newly finalized Harvester Feasibility Study, and the four-year plan for Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) management. The Board also reviewed progress on the "10 in 10" Demonstration Garden, an upcoming multi-agency water quality road map report, septic stewardship initiatives, and post-dredging surveys at Arrowhead Cove.

Detailed Minutes

Policy and Review Board Updates:

- **Minutes Approval:** Bob Sutton motioned to approve the February 2, 2026, PRB Regulatory Committee meeting minutes. The motion was approved by Bob Browning, Bob Hoffman, and Wendell Beitzel.
- **PRB Regulatory Committee Recommendations:** The Board reviewed the Boat Act Advisory Committee (BAAC) wake boat regulation recommendations. The recommended regulations increase the distance a wake boat may produce wake from structures. The recommendation was to increase the current regulation of 200 feet to 300 feet. Discussions highlighted that current 200-foot regulation lacks adequate enforcement, wake surfing is technically difficult to enforce as a non-towed sport, and a 300-foot rule would drastically shrink usable lake area and increase congestion.

The PRB Regulatory Committee voted to maintain Status Quo of 200 feet from structures. All other BAAC recommendations were accepted, including required engine cutoff lanyards attached to operators, warning stickers on wake boats, mandatory draining of ballast tanks during transport, and enhanced educational signage. Bob Sutton motioned to approve the recommendations, with Iden, Wendell, Hoffman, and Marta Schroyer voting in favor. MD DNR will focus heavily on outreach and education moving forward.

Deep Creek Lake Management Updates:

- **Outreach Signs:** Molly Ramsey reported on the launch ramp signage meeting with local marinas. The group evaluated drafting clear, accessible, and welcoming language for signage at the State Park boat ramp and local marinas to better educate operators on the rules and etiquette of Deep Creek Lake.

The Property Owners Association (POA) and the Watershed Foundation expressed support for the signage project and distributing information to ramp stewards and local marinas.

- **2026 Harvester Feasibility Pilot Study:** The Harvester Feasibility Pilot Study report was finalized and published on April 9, 2026.

Buffer strip permit holders are now permitted to use mechanical harvesters, raking, and benthic mats for SAV management within their permitted area of use, subject to an inspection and permit by Lake Management. Chemical treatments remain prohibited. Limits for using an aquatic harvester correspond to the existing benthic mat footprints.

Bob Sutton noted a POA survey of 188 members showed 186 were willing to pay for harvesting services. DNR will remain neutral and will not recommend specific private

contractors, but the POA and Watershed Foundation can compile independent lists of operating businesses to inform dock companies and residents.

- **Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Pilot Funding Plan:** A Unit-to-Unit Agreement between DNR Resource Assessment Services and Deep Creek Lake Management has been finalized and funds a four-year plan through

Year 1 - Fill two open positions to lead the project's initial phase which includes 1) identifying the problem areas and 2) work to determine density for “nuisance” SAV and develop a study design.

Year 2 - The following year would be implementing the next step of the harvester pilot study on a larger scale to determine impacts. Contracting a harvester for the second iteration of the pilot study is not included in the funding because there is not enough to cover that expense, so it will be supplemented by the Lake Management budget or other funding sources.

Year 3-4 - Pending results of that study, Maryland DNR/MPS could potentially manage “nuisance” SAV outside of individuals area of use or it could be determined that large scale harvesting is too impactful to resources. Hired SAV staff will continue to manage the SAV workload, which is large and specialized.

The 2026 hydrilla treatment schedule is slated to begin in June. DNR recommended establishing steward training directly at the marinas.

- **Lake Management Staffing Updates:** Rebekah Sanner has joined as the new Admin (10-month contract due to a current hiring freeze). Amanda Hathaway has joined as a Natural Resource Technician. Jonas Shaffer and Anna Cullen are returning as the two new Aquatic Resource Specialists starting May 20th. The complete seasonal team will feature 6 staff on staggered 10-month contracts.
- **"10 in 10" Updates:** The Demonstration Garden is scheduled for completion by the end of May. Each native plant is protected by a cage and clearly labeled with its species name. Additionally, Bob Hoffman highlighted the excellent quality of the custom-finished benches.
- **Deep Creek Watershed Foundation & Interagency Report:**

Molly Ramsey detailed recent meetings focused on elevating the active 2016 watershed plan through legislative support via Senator McKay.

An interagency road map report is underway to evaluate water quality, sediment management, tributary inputs, shoreline stabilization, and funding implementation. The

final report is due December 1, 2026, and will provide comprehensive cost estimates to address degrading water trends.

A joint lake boat tour was recently conducted with the health department, watershed foundation, and the POA. Monthly steering committee meetings will continue, alongside planned public engagement meetings.

Resource Assessment Services (RAS):

- Tom Parham submitted an update via Cristina Sanders requesting a 3-month, no-cost extension to process and integrate additional data into their ongoing water quality trend analysis. The extension is currently being processed, and the final report is anticipated in September.

Deep Creek Lake Watershed Foundation:

- **Septic Stewardship Initiative:** Bob Hoffman announced that the Watershed Foundation is prioritizing "Goal 9" this year: addressing the environmental impacts of non-functioning septic systems.

Action items include an educational "Brunch and Learn" video created alongside Western Maryland Septic and Garrett County, general maintenance outreach, and pursuing potential grant funds to subsidize septic tank pumping for residents.

Garrett County Government Updates:

- Bruce Michael reported that the Maryland Environmental Service (MES) will conduct a post-dredging bathymetric survey at Arrowhead Cove in two weeks. This will measure sediment redeposition rates since the project's completion.

In response to inquiries regarding native SAV replanted in the cove, it was noted that the native plants have successfully taken hold. Targeted hydrilla treatments continue outside the cove and will not harm native species like wild celery.

Natural Resources Police (NRP):

- No representatives were present at the meeting.

Public Comments and Questions:

1. **A public member noted that a Virginia resident who owns or works for a hydrilla treatment company wants to visit the lake. Can the POA host her?**
 - The POA can host her for a tour of the lake once a specific date is coordinated and set.
2. **Wendell Beitzel asked if the lake organizations or DNR are participating in the upcoming 250th anniversary of our country (Semi quincennial) events.**

- The DNR intends to help as much as possible and will feature an educational booth during the July 18th celebrations. The Watershed Foundation is also hoping to host a booth.

Final Remarks and Adjournment:

The next Policy and Review Board meeting is scheduled for **July 27, 2026**, at the Garrett College Performing Arts Center (PAC).

Bob Hoffman motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at **7:13 PM**.