

Deep Creek Lake Policy and Review Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: October 27, 2025

Time: 6:00PM

Location: Garrett College, PAC

Board Members in Attendance:

- Chairman Bob Browning
- Bob Sutton, Property Owners Association representative
- Patty Manown Mash, Chamber of Commerce representative
- Bob Hoffman, representing Senator McKay
- Mike McKay, Senator
- Jim Hinebaugh, Delegate
- Ryan Savage, Commissioner
- Jim Iden, Maryland Bass Federation representative
- Steve Green, Alternate for the Delegate

Other Attendees:

- Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Assistant Secretary Paul Peditto (virtual), Deep Creek Lake Manager Cristina Sanders, Grace Armendariz
- Tom Parham, Resource Assessment Service (Virtual)
- J.C Brooks, Maryland Department of the Environment (Virtual)
- Corporal Kaetzel, Natural Resources Police
- Bruce Michael, Garrett County Government
- Members of the Public

Meeting Summary:

The Policy and Review Board set its 2026 meeting dates and reviewed previous Regulation Committee discussions on marina slip totals, enforcement priorities, and buydown history, leading to conversation about updating buydown language and exploring a capacity study. August 8, 2025, minutes were approved. Lake Management reported progress on the Harvester Pilot Study, successful hydrilla control, an expanded goose hunt, seasonal dock reminders, and a staffing change. Resource Assessment Services (RAS) shared early water quality findings showing overall good–fair conditions with some degrading trends. DNR Fisheries had no new data due to equipment issues. Garrett County reported continued follow-up on the Arrowhead Cove dredging project, and Natural Resources Police noted a stable season with nine officers and no major updates.

Detailed Minutes

Policy and Review Board Updates:

The dates for the 2026 Policy and Review Board Meetings were determined:

- January 26, 2026
- April 27, 2026
- July 27, 2026
- October 26, 2026

Cristina Sanders read through minutes from several previous Regulation Committee meetings, including discussions regarding a review of marina rental slip numbers, lake violations along with enforcement priorities for both Natural Resources Police and the Lake Management Office, and a presentation by a previous lake manager, Paul Durham, who served many years ago on the history of the buydown and the purchasing process, which led to discussion on potentially changing language in the buydown and considering a capacity study.

August 8, 2025, Policy and Review Board Meeting Minutes were approved and will be published online.

Lake Management Updates:

Harvester Feasibility Pilot Study: Lake Manager Cristina Sanders provided a presentation on the status of the Harvester Pilot Study. The harvester was deployed twice, once in August and again at the end of September, at three sites of varying depths. The pilot study was conducted to test the feasibility of using this type of equipment in Deep Creek Lake to manage submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). The majority of the SAV in the lake was native and provided important ecological functions, such as maintaining water quality and providing habitat for aquatic species. However, some areas became overgrown and hindered recreational activities. For the study, divers completed surveys prior to the initial cutting and another survey following the cut to gather data and ensure that hydrilla, an invasive species, was not present in any of the areas to be cut. Following the first cutting, hydrilla was discovered in close proximity to the intermediate study site, so that site was removed from the second round of cutting to allow for hydrilla treatment and to reduce the risk of its spread.

DNR Fisheries was also involved in evaluating the potential impact on fisheries. Cut material from the harvester was examined to identify any fisheries by-catch during the process, including their number and species.

Lake Management, DNR Fisheries, and Resource Assessment Services will work together to analyze data, discuss options, and prepare the report. Cristina Sanders hopes to have a draft completed by the new year.

2025 Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Surveys: Cristina Sanders provided an update on the submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) surveys. Historically, there were 14 active hydrilla sites throughout the lake when hydrilla was first discovered, and the department has been treating and managing these areas since. Last year, the number of active treatment sites was reduced to three, though DNR continues to monitor all historic sites to ensure hydrilla has not returned.

Cristina reported that surveys conducted beyond the actively treated sites showed no occurrences of hydrilla at any of the historic locations. The program has been highly successful to date, and the goal is to continue effective management moving forward.

Deep Creek Lake & Broadford Lake Goose Hunt: Grace Armendariz, Natural Resource Technician at the Lake Management Office, provided an update on the annual goose hunt. The program originally began with four hunting sites, but this year it has been expanded to eight sites, which will be open for a total of 14 days during the week of Thanksgiving and the week of Christmas. After that period, all but two sites will close. The two state owned sites, one located near the dam and one within the state park, will remain open for a total of seven weeks. A total of 120 hunters have been awarded permits to participate in this year's hunt.

The hunt is open to all legal waterfowl in accordance with Maryland hunting regulations. This means that hunters are not only targeting geese but may also harvest other waterfowl species present at the lake.

Post Autumn Glory Reminders: Cristina Sanders provided seasonal reminders following the conclusion of Autumn Glory. It was a busy and successful season on the lake, but activity is now beginning to slow down. Docks must be removed by December 1 and stored above the high-water mark. Cristina also noted that this is an ideal time for anyone with missing or damaged dock plates, or those wishing to have plates replaced, to submit an order.

Staffing Updates: Long-time employee Jenna Sivic is leaving her position, and the Lake Management Office extends best wishes for her future endeavors.

Resource Assessment Services (RAS):

Tom Parham from DNR summarized early findings from an ongoing long-term water quality study. The study is currently two months into its latest phase, reviewing data from 2009 to 2024.

Preliminary conclusions show that overall, lake conditions are considered good to fair. The watershed remains primarily forested, and although impervious surface coverage is increasing, levels are still relatively low. Earlier trends from 2009 to 2015 showed degrading conditions in several indicators, including clarity, bottom dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll, conductivity, and nutrients. When looking at the full 2009 to 2024 dataset, degrading water quality conditions appear to be increasing, particularly in the southern portion of the lake. There has also been a significant decline in main lake water clarity. Water temperatures are rising by approximately one degree Fahrenheit at main lake stations, which is consistent with trends elsewhere in the state over longer monitoring periods. Additionally, low bottom dissolved oxygen events are becoming more frequent at the Glendale Road Bridge station.

Despite these concerns, Tom emphasized that overall lake conditions remain good to fair but continued monitoring and management are important.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Fisheries:

Western Region Fisheries Manager, Matt Sells, reported that DNR Fisheries had planned fall surveys to collect age and growth data on the crappie population, which has been difficult to sample in past years. However, the electrofishing boat broke down, so no new data or updates are available at this time.

Garrett County Government:

Bruce Michael provided an update on the Arrowhead Cove dredging project, which was completed in 2024. Two key components followed the dredging work: the planting of native grasses in Arrowhead Cove and the release of both the lessons learned report and the technical drawings report, issued last summer. The project will remain open with Maryland Environmental Service, the county's contractor for the dredging project, through part of next year.

Bruce explained that this extension allows time to conduct a post-dredging survey of Arrowhead Cove, planned for next spring or early summer. This will mark two years since the dredging was completed and will help estimate how much sediment has returned to the cove. Additional work is also underway to assess Arrowhead Run, the stream that drains into the cove, in partnership with West Virginia University and the Water Resources Research Institute.

Bruce noted that while the project is technically complete and considered successful, dredging is an expensive and highly technical process requiring extensive design phases and both federal and state permits. This effort served as a pilot project fully funded by the State of Maryland, and the team is pleased with the outcome and ongoing monitoring efforts.

Natural Resources Police (NRP):

Sergeant Ethan Leonard was scheduled to attend but had training. Corporal Kaetzel reported that NRP has no major updates to share. Corporal Kaetzel noted this was his first summer on the lake and emphasized that NRP's primary focus continues to be safety. He also reported that the unit now has nine officers, which is a positive step forward.

Public Comments and Questions:

1. As Deep Creek Lake continues to age and naturally accumulate sediment due to its function as a reservoir, is there a long-term plan to implement systematic dredging to maintain water depth and preserve its primary recreational use?

Sediment accumulation is an unavoidable process in any reservoir system and that, over time, depths will naturally decrease. The goal is to delay this process for as long as possible, rather than eliminate it entirely. The state has invested heavily in shoreline stabilization projects and continues to consider long-term mitigation strategies. Through the watershed management plan, teams are working to identify priority areas experiencing higher shoreline erosion and determine which streams are contributing the most sediment. These evaluations will guide future mitigation actions intended to prolong the lake's recreational quality.

2. Given that the pilot dredging project identified certain coves with significant sediment buildup and a strong desire from residents to see those areas dredged, what is the county's, PRB's, and DNR's position moving forward on addressing coves that need dredging, especially considering the high cost and the expectation that conditions will continue to worsen if no action is taken?

Several reports have identified 10 sediment-impacted coves, primarily in the southern end of the lake. While the pilot dredging project was successfully funded through state support, it is unlikely that the county could finance similar efforts on its own. The state is also facing significant financial constraints and does not appear positioned to fund additional dredging projects in the near future. Although some grant opportunities may exist, there is currently nothing on the horizon from either the county or DNR to support further dredging efforts.

3. Is there any indication of the source of hydrilla in the dredged area? Is it possible at all that it was brought in by some equipment?

The hydrilla observed this year was not located in the area that was dredged. The dredging occurred at the head of Arrowhead Cove in a small, three-acre area, while the newly identified SAV was found outside the cove, closer to the Harvey's Peninsula (Honi Honi) area. All dredged material was fully separated and removed from the site, and they are confident the activity did not contribute to any spread of hydrilla outside Arrowhead Cove. As an added precaution, the entire Arrowhead Cove area was treated to ensure there was no possibility of hydrilla.

4. A representative from the Pergin Farms Property Owners Association stated that many residents had heard rumors that the State is actively pursuing acquisition of a property, which borders Penn Cove. They asked whether the acquisition is occurring, whether there will be opportunities for public input, and if the State could offer any information to ease concerns regarding future use, traffic impacts, or development.

Paul Peditto explained that land acquisition negotiations are confidential and are not discussed publicly until they are formally presented to the Board of Public Works, which is the first point at which public comment becomes available. The State cannot confirm the identity of any potential sellers prior to that stage, as doing so would undermine the confidentiality necessary for willing sellers. If an acquisition is completed, a planning phase would then begin, including stakeholder engagement on potential uses. Paul also clarified that no parcels on the Deep Creek Lake border are scheduled for settlement in January 2026. Funding for any potential acquisition would typically come from Program Open Space through the real estate transfer tax.

5. Why was there no agenda item or update regarding potential regulations on wake boats, given that this issue was discussed previously, other states are actively studying it, and concerns remain about declining water quality, turbidity, and disturbance to submerged

aquatic vegetation? Does the board recognize the potential harm, and is there a reason no progress or discussion appeared on the agenda?

DNR explained that the group previously agreed to wait for the Boat Act Advisory Committee (BAAC) to complete its statewide review of wake boat regulations before taking further action. The BAAC is leading the process and has indicated that it hopes to conclude its study around the first of the year. Because this work is ongoing, the topic was not placed on the agenda.

It was noted that the POA has two members serving on the BAAC, providing awareness, representation, and the ability to offer input if needed. Once the BAAC releases its findings and recommendations, the board will have the opportunity to review, approve, disapprove, or make its own recommendations. If any issues arise that specifically impact Deep Creek Lake, they will be shared with the board.

Final Remarks and Adjournment:

The board recognized and expressed appreciation for the extensive work and volunteer effort that went into the Deep Creek Lake 100th anniversary celebrations. Public participation was strong, and the events were considered highly successful. It was noted that the celebration received an award, and significant grant funding from regional businesses and counties supported the activities, no POA funds were used. Approximately \$25,000 remains and will be donated to the Watershed Foundation and potentially the local school system for an environmental class. The board thanked everyone involved, including the roughly 8,000 attendees who participated in the events.

The next meeting will be held at 6:00pm on January 26, 2025, at the Garrett College Performing Arts Center.

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm.