

Star Lake Update
Friends of Star Lake (FOSL)
July 2011

As we enter the summer season there's much to report. First a summary:

- Star Lake restoration: FOSL has received an anonymous **gift of \$500,000** to repair the Star Lake dam !!!!
- 2011 Annual Weed Control Program: We are awaiting a permit from the Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation (VT DEC) for this year's treatment, a combination of herbicide application to destroy Milfoil, followed by hand pulling of nuisance native species in key locations.
- Organization: FOSL has now been incorporated into the Mt. Holly Conservation Trust (MHCT).
- Fund Raising: We will be kicking off a new two-prong fundraising initiative to support the cost of annual treatments, as well as to augment the extraordinary dam restoration gift. Details about this and FOSL's new membership program will be mailed to all Mt. Holly residents.

Star Lake Restoration

Since Jackson built the first wooden dam, Star Lake has played a central role in Mount Holly, initially for manufacturing, and now for recreation. It provides swimming, boating, fishing in the summer and a trail for cross country skiing and snowmobiling in the winter. Through a combination of factors – aging dam, introduction of Milfoil – Star Lake has experienced serious deterioration. For the past 15 years the State of Vermont has found the dam at Star Lake to be a “safety hazard.” Several years ago the Town of Mt. Holly acquired the dam and beach area, however, the cost of repairing the dam -- estimated to be approx. \$500,000 -- has been considered by the Select Board to be hopelessly out-of-reach.

The stop-gap solution to limit the danger from the dam has been to lower the water level in the lake. However, the shallower lake level has compromised recreational use of Star Lake, and in addition, has contributed to the overgrowth of Milfoil and other nuisance weeds. The low water level helps to promote weed growth due to warmer water, deeper sunlight penetration, and higher phosphate concentrations.

Although repairing the dam has been a daunting prospect, it is the keystone to saving our lake. Earlier this year, FOSL and the MHCT received a truly awesome gift of \$500,000. This gift is a major step toward funding Star Lake's restoration. The Select Board learned of the extraordinary donation to MHCT and FOSL at its meeting on May 10, and pledged full support for plans being developed with dam design engineers and the VT DEC. The intention of the gift is to preserve Star Lake for generations to come and that involves more than just replacing the dam. To be sure, the dam is a crucial part of saving the lake, but not the only factor requiring attention. FOSL is currently working with dam and lake engineers to define the extent of the problem and a scope of work to restore both the dam and its outflow through Belmont Village.

2011 Annual Plan – nuisance plant control

FOSL is again working with the VT DEC and our consultant, Lycott Engineering, to address the problem of plant overgrowth that includes both the invasive species, Eurasian Milfoil, and several native species. This is an ongoing problem that we must address as an annual effort over the long term. For the past eight years our nuisance plant control methods have included both herbicide application and physical removal (handpulling). Since Milfoil can never be entirely eradicated our long term strategy is to apply herbicide every few years to target Milfoil re-growth, and to follow that with

mechanical or hand harvesting of some percentage of nuisance, native plants. Our objective is to maintain Star Lake as a partially open waterbody with some weed beds preserved as natural habitats and fishing areas.

For 2011 FOSL has submitted to the VT DEC a plan to treat Star Lake with the herbicide "Sonar" which targets Milfoil. This is the herbicide that we applied in our first whole-lake treatment in 2004 and it was very effective. Following Milfoil knock-down we plan to selectively remove nuisance native species. Once approval has been obtained from the VT DEC we will begin treatment in late June or early July.

Organization

After many years under the auspices of the Mt. Holly Community Assoc., FOSL has now moved under the MHCT. This change was made to better reflect FOSL's mission to preserve Star Lake as an open waterbody, and the MHCT's broader conservation mission. MHCT made a minor change to its Mission Statement by adding "and natural resources." The Trust's mission is now: "The purpose of the MHCT is to preserve the beauty and character of Mount Holy through the conservation of land and natural resources that are valued by the community." FOSL was incorporated as a standing committee of MHCT. Through these actions MHCT has made a commitment to handle the planning and financing of the repair of the dam and the preservation of Star Lake through a number of strategies currently being investigated. We thank the Mt. Holly Community Assoc. for their support over the past decade, and now look forward to working within the MHCT.

Fund Raising

Over the past eight years Mt. Holly residents and friends have given generously to FOSL. As we ramp up our new, broader program for Star Lake's restoration, we ask for your continued support and generosity. Please see our upcoming mailing for more information about how to contribute to this effort.

For more information please call or email, and see the link below....

http://www.mounthollyvt.org/FOSL/StarLakePresentation08_24_09.pdf

Sincerely yours,
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co-chairs FOSL, a committee of the Mt. Holly Conservation Trust

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