

Tonetta Lake Advisory Committee meeting, 10/5/15  
Minutes

In attendance:

TLAC members:

Robert Zubrycki, Chairman

Bob Cullen, Town Board member and Town Board Liaison

Patty Borhman, Director of Recreation and Tonetta Town Beach

Don Cuomo, Limnologist, Blu Dot

Mike Langley, Karl Lebitsch, Bob Lund, Bill Macgregor, Karen Ratajack.

Also in attendance:

Lynne Eckardt, Town Board member

Approximately 20 residents from the Tonetta Lake Park area

RZ gave a brief update of TLAC activities, explaining that while the committee has not met recently, Tonetta continues to be monitored:

- The Town of Southeast (TOSE) continues to fund baseline water quality studies taken throughout the season each year, by Don Cuomo of Blu Dot, to monitor the Lake and the effects of the Grass Carp, added in 2006. Past results and reports are on the TOSE website.
- A large subsurface gravel wetland was recently added on Shore Drive, North of Lakeview Manor. This will significantly reduce the amount of nutrients and pollution entering the Lake.
- Walleye were added several seasons ago to help balance the fish and thus the phytoplankton populations and algae. This season we've seen increased clarity and fewer small fish. We are awaiting results from 2015 tests on phytoplankton populations.
- There were no Town Beach closures this year for bacteria or blue green algae. Many other Lakes in Putnam County did not fare as well according to the Board of Health.
- Preliminary results for 2015 show a slight increase in clarity
- Water Quality test results for 2014 were shared

Questions:

Concerns were raised by residents about the increase in lily pads and plant growth in the Lake at the Tonetta Lake Park Association property and private residences between that property and the dam.

DC and TLAC members explained that the Carp (added in 2006) may be nearing the end of their effectiveness and have eaten all of their preferred foods and will not eat lily Pads. RZ will visit a resident's property to assist in identifying the problematic aquatic plants other than the lily pads. The negative effects of the Carp were discussed – decrease in water clarity, increase in algae, the largest sudden impact to

Lake Tonetta ever, completely changing the plant population and ecosystem in a short time, it will take several more years to re-balance.

Questions about plant control were asked. Residents cited an increase in submerged plants and lily pads over the past several seasons. The discussion about potential solutions included:

- Phosphorus Binding. DC explained this process, which he has seen to be successful in other lakes he manages. (Decrease in dissolved Phosphorus and thus less plant growth and greatly increased clarity) This process is not yet allowed in New York State. Cost is not yet available, but could be significant.
- Herbicides. DC explained that he is against these in any form due the negative impacts on the ecosystem.
- Harvester. Bob L explained that past use of large-scale harvesters on Tonetta was not successful.
- Karl L and Karen R of the Shore Drive association explained their tools and process for raking plants from the swimming area. TLPA members will be in touch with them to learn of crafting a similar tool.
- DC and TLAC members explained the importance of proper yard maintenance, no-phosphorus fertilizers and maintaining septic systems. Past TLAC newsletters with detailed info are on the TOSE website.
- DC explained that the most successful tools for improving Tonetta are long term fixes, such as the new subsurface gravel wetland and that these fixes may not be for us, but for our children and grandchildren's generations.

#### Septic Systems:

Residents were concerned about possible failing systems in the area.

TLAC members and town council members Cullen and Eckardt explained the Putnam County program requiring all residences to pump systems and have them inspected at least every 5 years. (Violators will be ticketed and can be fined) The TOSE administers the program; next year is the 5<sup>th</sup> year. A resident raised concern over cost of septic repairs/replacement. RZ explained that the Putnam County septic repair program is no longer funded.

Questions were asked about trapping of the beavers a few seasons ago, regarding the necessity for this and the TLAC's input. Don Cuomo explained that while he was not involved in the process, in his opinion, beavers in and around the cedar swamp are very problematic for several reasons: the cedar swamp is the largest filter of water coming into the lake, beavers were taking down cedar trees on the edge and inside of the swamp, causing damage and the potential for damming within the swamp, which could have caused water rise and killed trees and vegetation in sections of the swamp. The DEC is in charge of permitting and methods allowed in NYS. Also, this swamp is significant in that it contains the northernmost, inland stand of Atlantic White Cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*).

A question was raised regarding large wetland to west of Tonetta, about water level rise, tree die-off and watershed issues. RZ explained that there was a rise in water level in the large wetland (approximately the size of Tonetta and the cedar swamp combined) and that it was likely that this rise was caused by beaver damming, Bob L. suggested metro North may have dealt with the issues as the water level has returned to normal. It was asked if the swamp will regenerate – DC suggested it could, but will take time.

Residents were also concerned about increased noise from I-84 since the tree die-off and potential effects of the Hotel and development proposed at Crossroads. It was explained that the Maybrook RR line is the dividing line for the Tonetta watershed and that Tonetta is not within the watershed for this potential development.

TLPA members asked about sharing information through TLPA newsletters. RZ explained that past TLAC newsletters/articles are on the TOSE website. TLAC contact information is also on the website. This can be used to contact us for questions or for residents who wish to join or get involved.