

**DEEP BOATING DIVISION
NAVIGATION & BOATING INFRASTRUCTURE UNIT**

Candlewood Lake State Boat Launch
Responses to Design Questions and Comments

Below is a list of all questions and recommendations with responses regarding the design of the Candlewood Lake State boat launch at Squantz Cove in New Fairfield which was presented at the Public Information Meeting held on March 4, 2021. **NOTE:** Questions and recommendations have been truncated or combined with others of a similar nature and responded to collectively. However, if your question is not covered in this list, e-mail yolanda.cooley@ct.gov. DEEP will be reviewing the comments we received from the public and potential changes with the consulting engineer in the coming weeks.

SCOPE/SIZE OF PROJECT

1. **COMMENT:** Keep the existing number of parking spaces at 75 or consider further reducing the amount of total parking. The current proposal will exacerbate the existing overcrowding problem on the lake particularly on weekends when the lake sees peak usage and when the ramp is most popular.

RESPONSE: The Candlewood Lake State boat launch used to have a listed parking capacity of 100 cars with trailers. However, due to the gravel parking lot design with undesignated parking spaces the facility did not always reach capacity and therefore the capacity listing was reduced to 75 spaces. With a new and improved parking lot with designated spaces, we can return to the 100-space limit with a more controlled and improved traffic flow.

2. **COMMENT:** The lake is already very crowded and the number of boats leaving this ramp at high speeds in the mornings are a hazard to other lake users, such as swimmers, paddle boarders, kayaks, etc. The additional parking and boat trailers must be studied at this location as the Squantz Pond State Park area is already a huge issue causing traffic along that stretch of road. By adding this capacity in the same area of road will be absurd for local traffic and the authorities responsible.

RESPONSE: The launch capacity will be returning to its original designation of 100 cars with trailers. In addition, the renovated launch will be displacing many picnickers who may have utilized that portion of the park thereby offsetting some of the additional usage.

3. **COMMENT:** Is there or has there been an environmental impact study proposed or required for this project? If not, there should be one in order to see how this will impact the lake and surrounding communities.

RESPONSE: No, for a state project to require an environmental impact evaluation, it must pose a significant effect on the environment as set forth in RCSA Sec 22a-1a-3. Per DEEP guidance established per RCSA 22a-1a-4, an environmental impact evaluation (EIE) is required for new boat launch construction or in those boat launch renovation projects where the facility is expanding parking by more than 25 vehicles or 50%. This project does not meet the threshold to trigger an EIS.

4. **COMMENT:** There needs to be a focus on addressing the following: securing of the launch during off hours, reconsideration of launch hours and numbers of fishing tournaments/participants, continuing to limit the number of vessels being launched to reduce overcrowding on the lake.

RESPONSE: Under federal grant funding requirements, state boat launches are required to be open for all purposes for which they were constructed; this includes fishing and boating which occur at all hours of the day and night. Fishing tournaments are limited to 50% of the parking capacity of a launch, and the number of transient vessels launching is limited to the parking capacity. Please note that when the lot is full, we close the launch to all launching or retrieval.

5. **COMMENT:** Overall the plans are good for a lesser used ramp. The state goal should be to use more of the park for boating. I like to see three to four lane ramps. Widen the ramp, move handicap boat spaces north. Get rid of the grass island below car HC spaces.

RESPONSE: We maximized the design based on the available area provided. We are considering removing the grass island design.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) ISSUES

6. **COMMENT:** The efforts to make this facility ADA accessible is appreciated.

RESPONSE: The DEEP is incorporating the latest technology and best management practices to comply with Federal ADA requirements.

7. **COMMENT:** The area for handicapped parking seems to be in the middle of the launch area, it looks like a difficult place to have people with disabilities.

RESPONSE: We will modify this setup as much as we can to make it safer while still complying with ADA slope requirements.

8. **COMMENT:** Will there be more handicap parking for boat trailers?

RESPONSE: Handicap parking spaces are limited by the slopes and pathways required to the ramp and docks. If we can change a handicap car stall to handicap trailered, we will.

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES ISSUES

9. **COMMENT:** Use space gained by reducing parking to add infrastructure dedicated to invasive species inspection, disposal and decontamination.

RESPONSE: The DEEP is considering measures at the launch to help prevent the introduction and transmission of invasive species.. These may include the use of a washdown station.

10. **COMMENT:** Include space for multiple educational stations discussing invasive species protection, boating safety, Candlewood Lake regulations and other critical topics boaters should be aware of.

RESPONSE: We have found that the best way to present information to boaters is on the signboard in close proximity to the ramp. In addition, we are exploring the possibility of

embedding into the asphalt adjacent to the ramps and docks highly visible pavement marking designs that include boating safety and invasive species messaging .

11. **COMMENT:** Include an inspection station for AIS. It could be located so it minimizes the effect on the flow of traffic to the ramp.

RESPONSE: Measures including the possibility of deploying and using a washdown station to help address the concerns with AIS are under consideration.

12. **COMMENT:** Include a decontamination station or at least a designated location for future installation.

RESPONSE: Measures including the possibility of deploying and using a washdown station to help address the concerns with AIS are under consideration.

WATER QUALITY

13. **COMMENT:** Incorporate more robust green infrastructure (i.e. rain gardens, bio-swales) to improve stormwater runoff management from the parking lot and roadways, rather than the one “stormwater filter” on the side of one roadway leading to the lake.

RESPONSE: The parking lot will be a permeable gravel surface. However, if or when the lot is paved, runoff will be directed to the grass aprons around the perimeter. Roadways to and from the ramp will be constructed to direct runoff into the grassy areas and aprons wherever possible.

14. **COMMENT:** Please do not pave the parking lot. This would be so environmentally unfriendly.

RESPONSE: Initially the parking lot will not be paved. However, the maintenance costs of a gravel lot are more significant in terms of dollars, construction downtime, and manpower. In addition, gravel parking lots can form ruts and potholes that damage vehicles and trailers. However, this recommendation will be considered.

15. **COMMENT:** Please keep the sidewalks natural too. There are materials that can be used even compliant with ADA.

RESPONSE: The only permanent non-paved or cement sidewalk materials currently known would be stone dust. However, with the slopes and heavy traffic, they would have to be resurfaced frequently to maintain ADA compliance and would likely contribute to erosion.

OVERALL LAYOUT

16. **COMMENT:** People do not want to follow the one-way design.

RESPONSE: We will have clear signage directing people to/from the ramp. However, we understand that we can't prevent people from going the wrong way.

17. **COMMENT:** The car top launch area is where I see trouble, they will park right in the middle of the launch. I'd like to see grassy area used on the right for car tops.

RESPONSE: Carry-in boaters will have a designated area for them to use. Our experience is that this system works.

18. **COMMENT:** Proposal to add car parking along the eastern edge of the parking lot and relocate the tie down area to the front of the currently proposed parking lot exit.

RESPONSE: We will consider other car parking options. However, this proposal will block the exit to the mainly trailered parking lot. In addition, it will add crossing traffic over the sidewalk.

19. **COMMENT:** Proposal to lengthen the rigging area approaching the ramp.

RESPONSE: We are looking at extending the rigging area to include the island. This will require shifting the Handicap parking to the north. However, any changes will depend on the ability to meet ADA slope requirements.

20. **COMMENT:** Proposal to relocate sidewalk around the Handicap trailered parking stalls and move the stalls west to allow easier and safer access to the ramp.

RESPONSE: We will incorporate the sidewalk changes and are looking at moving the Handicap trailered parking stalls away from the water. In addition, we are looking at placing the toilet building closer to the ramp. However, any changes will depend on the ability to meet ADA slope requirements.

21. **COMMENT:** Include an entry gate and manned booth to ensure effective future management of the launch area.

RESPONSE: As this facility is situated in the state park, a fee collection booth for out-of-state boaters may be incorporated into the final design. However, with regards to management of the launch, we plan to have Boating Education Assistants on site but near the ramp to control traffic, conduct vessel safety checks, and check for invasive species.

22. **COMMENT:** Will there be gates?

RESPONSE: We are considering the installation of gates for when the launch is filled to capacity. Per Federal rules regarding boat launches, any gates that get installed cannot be closed to restrict access – for example – to times when the launch is staffed.

23. **COMMENT:** Expand the restrooms so that recreational boaters can return to the launch area and use the restrooms while on the lake for the day.

RESPONSE: The inclusion of a fixed toilet building, as proposed, will address the boaters' needs.

24. **COMMENT:** Provide additional space for boaters to prep for launch.

RESPONSE: We are considering removing the island in the turning area and adding another section for rigging boats.

DOCKS

25. **COMMENT:** Proposal to add two docks; one at the north side and one at the south side of the ramp respectively.

RESPONSE: We will consider adding a shorter section of dock to the north side to facilitate ADA access. However, a south dock would interfere with the carry-in launch area and it is unnecessary. The current design provides ample docking space for two ramps as they launch and retrieve at this facility. In addition, a south dock would compromise the advantages of the center dock system which allows increased angle approaches.

26. **COMMENT:** I don't think the center dock design is the most efficient. A better pier design would be similar to Lake Zoar, plus add a 'T' dock at the end.

RESPONSE: We are considering the addition of a second dock to the north which would provide better access for the disabled, however, a 'T' design is not practical as it blocks direct access to the ramp and can collect floating debris.

27. **COMMENT:** The center dock I love. But people will just dock and block others from using the ramp. If we put docks on both sides of the ramp, that would leave more room to dock.

RESPONSE: Each ramp provides over 20 feet of area to back down, easily going around someone tied to the dock. The comment proposes docks on either side of the launch ramp would reduce the navigational approach angles. That is, boaters attempting to tie-up on the inside of parallel docks would need to approach the docks directly thereby reducing the maneuvering room to access the inside dock spaces.

28. **COMMENT:** Include an additional short-term parking dock for boaters to have access to restrooms to provide much needed restroom access on the lake.

RESPONSE: All state boat launch docks are short term. Besides, boaters are not allowed to leave their vessels tied up and unattended outside of the launching and retrieval process. Therefore, with 160 linear feet of docking provided, this should be sufficient for this purpose.

29. **COMMENT:** Please design it so even if the dock is removed in winter the bass boats or others can launch the boats.

RESPONSE: The launch is open and usable all year, with or without docks, depending on the water levels of course. The new ramp will extend significantly further and allow for launching/retrieval at lower water levels.

30. **COMMENT:** Who is going to monitor dock usage? Currently in the summer there are people at the Park who choose to swim by the boat ramp, which is very dangerous.

RESPONSE: Swimming at State boat launches is illegal. Our Boating Education Assistants, EnCon Officers, and Park and Field Services maintenance staff will report violations or respond accordingly.

31. **COMMENT:** Will the new docks have rubber bumpers and stable pilots like Lillinonah?

RESPONSE: Yes.

32. **COMMENT:** Will they be dredging the end of the current concrete pad, because when the water level is low, it's hard to back your boat without hitting rocks?

RESPONSE: The ramp will be extended and is designed to allow launching of vessels at all water levels except winter or deep drawdowns.

LIGHTING

33. **COMMENT:** Please have the lighting solar powered for the most part.

RESPONSE: The streetlight will be solar powered only.

34. **COMMENT:** Will the launch have night lights for fishing?

RESPONSE: Yes, a solar powered streetlight is included in the design.

35. **COMMENT:** Lights to extend hours will attract more boats, when fewer are better, especially when inspections to prevent Zebra mussels is considered.

RESPONSE: Lighting is being incorporated to improve safety since the launch is open for night boating and fishing.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

36. **COMMENT:** This proposed project could be a huge issue for the Town of New Fairfield & its elected officials to deal with. The State must make users pay a fee in order to help pay for the staff that will be needed to navigate and run a facility of this size.

RESPONSE: The launch will have Boating Education Assistants there to help manage on site operations. There are no provisions to collect additional fees for in-state boaters.

37. **COMMENT:** Collection of fees from all that use the launch, not just those that use the launch when staffed.

RESPONSE: State regulations do not allow for collection of fees from residents, as they already pay for access to the state park in their registrations. However, this comment will be forwarded for consideration with respect to non-CT residents.

38. **COMMENT:** Where is the money coming from for these improvements?

RESPONSE: The renovations will be funded 75% using Federal F70D Sport Fish Restoration Funds and 25% from State matching funds.

39. **COMMENT:** We hope that your priorities and funding, which we understand is now estimated at \$750,000, would be shifted completely from upgrading the Squantz ramp to providing more inspectors on the launches, more thorough inspections, tighter controls when inspectors are not there, fewer fishing tournaments, more boat screening, and more concern for our lake's health. Locking down the launches while and until these steps are taken should be seriously considered.

RESPONSE: The Department tries to provide access for the public in a responsible, fair, and equitable way with the resources and funding available.

PARK ISSUES

40. **COMMENT:** Please keep the Park as natural as possible.

RESPONSE: The DEEP tries to renovate facilities with environmental considerations. However, we must comply with ADA guidelines concerning surfaces and slopes, while also striving to reduce maintenance and repair costs.

41. **COMMENT:** Keeping the sandy shoreline to the left and right of the launch areas lets boaters beach their boats and speeds up the process.

RESPONSE: We expect that the dock space proposed to be provided will be sufficient to address any past delays at the ramp. Regarding the sandy areas, the Boating Division needs to ensure that we do not inadvertently create an attractive nuisance by establishing what appears to be a swimming area.

42. **COMMENT:** This may be a State Parks Division issue, but could we remove picnic tables and grills along the shoreline to reduce boat beaching along the shoreline and large gatherings?

RESPONSE: At this time, the Boating Division has no plans to remove the picnic tables and grills in the area.

43. **COMMENT:** Will there be picnic tables?

RESPONSE: Not located in the boat launch area. We do not want to encourage illegal use. However, having picnic tables away from the ramp and water for Park patrons may be provided, but is yet to be determined.

44. **COMMENT:** Is there anything that can be added to the design in the areas adjacent to the north and south of the proposed launch along the lake frontage that would make it less attractive to swimming and beaching of vessels and PWCs?

RESPONSE: The facility will incorporate NO SWIMMING signage at the boat launch. There is no restriction for the beaching of vessels and PWCs adjacent to the boat launch provided no swimmers enter the water.

GENERAL

45. **COMMENT:** Is this project part of a plan to re-do all ramps, or is it limited to Candlewood?

RESPONSE: DEEP has a list of State boat launches that need renovations for a variety of reasons. However, we work on them individually as staff time, resources and funding allow.

46. **COMMENT:** Is there a timeline for the project? Will it impact scheduled tournaments?

RESPONSE: Once the design is complete, the permits will have to be obtained. This could take six months or so. Construction will occur after that. However, there are no set timelines. Yes, if the launch is closed for renovations, all use will be prohibited. We do not allow the public to use the facility during the construction phase due to liability, however, we would aim to have the work conducted during the off-season so as to minimize impacts to boating access.

47. **COMMENT:** On the map provided there is notation about Summer High Water 426.7' and Summer Low Water 424.2' and a mention of NAV88. I call just about every morning to find out the lake level, and in the summer the level is around 428.9'. This does not match the NAVD88 level. How was the published level determined? Also, what is the definition of "summer?" Is it July and August?

RESPONSE: The lake elevation information came from FirstLight's Shoreline Management Manual (March 2014). The manual includes the operating and drawdown elevations in the original CL&P/Rocky River Vertical Datum and the NGVD29 datum. Our surveyor included the FirstLight's lake boundary in the CL&P and the NAVD88 datum. A sample conversion:

CL&P/RRVD = 429.5'
NAVD88 = 426.8' (-2.7')
Operating Range
Normal: 429.5'-427.0' (CL&P) or 426.8'-424.3' (NAVD88)
Winter: 425.9'-418.0' (CL&P) or 423.2'-415.3' (NAVD88)

The manual notes the normal operating level (summer) as Memorial Day to October 15th.