LLCC Lowell Lake Concerned Citizens

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**LOWELL LAKE UPDATE**

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After requesting and obtaining internal documents and emails from Vermont Forests, Parks & Recreation through the Vermont Public Records Law, Lowell Lake Concerned Citizens believes that statements made by FP&R about plans to develop Lowell Lake State Park have been intentionally misleading.

Documents obtained reveal that the state has been actively pursuing two primary development plans for Lowell Lake for more than a year and those plans have progressed to the point of detailed development maps, construction estimates by contractors and cost projections. Contrary to the insistence by FP&R that the development of overnight lodging at the lake was just one option under consideration it appears that the extensive development of an overnight lodging complex has been the exclusive focus of the department for some time.

The state apparently has two primary development plans, both of which would dramatically change the character of Lowell Lake and present the potential for significant negative impacts on the lake and surrounding wetlands, bogs, forests and wildlife habitats. The state plans include the renovation or replacement of 11 cabins, the addition of several cottages, the construction of a large bathhouse containing toilets and showers and an “events space” with large outdoor deck to be rented for weddings, parties and gatherings, that would hold up to 100 people. The plans include new access roads, lighting, a central septic system or systems, walkways, barbeque grills, parking lots and a trailer parking area. The state has also developed plans for the construction of a completely new cul-de-sac style lodging complex that would include a new road and individual parking areas for up to 11 structures, encircling a central bathhouse. That development would occur in what is now forest to the south of the lake.

Internal documents show $3M in taxpayer money will be required to complete the development. The significant cost of the proposed project will likely provide little or no benefit to the local economy and may actually take business away from local inns, campgrounds and motels while paying no property taxes to the host community.

LLCC believes that FP&R has not been honest with the community about its true intentions and has been ignoring concerns raised by the community, LLCC and the Londonderry Conservation Commission. LLC found almost no reference in internal FP&R documents to the assessment of potential environmental impacts and no evidence that FP&R has exercised due diligence in examining the potential impacts on forest blocks, habitats or wildlife corridors. Internal emails also confirm that FP&R intends to seek waivers from local zoning designed to protect Lowell Lake as a way or side-stepping compliance with set back and other protective requirements, directly contradicting statements made by the Director of Forests, Parks and Recreation who insisted that there would be “no reason not to follow local zoning.”

While FP&R was forging ahead with development plans and attempting to deflect community concerns, it was circulating internal documents containing dismissive references to members of the community who have been expressing those concerns, referring pejoratively to them as “the locals” while discussing strategies for collecting survey responses out of the area to dilute community comments that are not supportive of the state’s plans.

FP&R has been disingenuous with the community and caviler in its lack of concern for Lowell Lake, viewing it as simply an opportunity for increasing attendance and park revenue.

LLCC urges all those who value Lowell Lake as a remarkable regional resource to actively and vocally oppose the state’s plan to turn the lake into the resort complex. Vermont Forests, Parks & Recreation has shown little interest in being honest and straightforward with those who know and love Lowell Lake and even less interest in developing a long term management plan for Lowell Lake that respects its considerable value as a tranquil, natural place and habitat for an extensive and diverse community of plants and wildlife.