

May 19, 2016

Stormwater Pollution Plan: Comments for the Public Record

My name is Scott Carpenter. I'm president of the Friends of Bass Lake and a 35 year resident of the Minikahda Oaks neighborhood. We should all understand from the outset that the restoration of Bass Lake can't happen without a plan to clean up the polluted water flowing into the wetland. The core of this plan must include capital improvement projects that reduce the volume of water flowing into the lake basin.

Last year, during the open meeting permit process the City Council asked the following question of City Staff; "How many residents requested a copy of the MS4 permit?" The answer was, "Only one; a member from the Friends of Bass Lake."

This might lead residents to believe that SLP citizens don't really care about cleaning up stormwater or restoring Bass Lake. While many residents acknowledge they want clean water, and Governor Dayton has made clean water his legacy issue, it seems most residents are quickly distracted from the diligence required to achieve the goal.

I'd like to offer a personal insight on why it's been so difficult to get progress on the restoration of Bass Lake. I've been a Boy Scout leader in SLP for 6 years. Scouting, of course, is built around the development of youth skills in the outdoors. The Bass Lake Preserve is the kind of place Scout Leaders look to for skill training and recreation. These quiet places of solitude and natural wonder capture the attention of boys and girls alike. That interest when fostered can lead to successful careers in forestry, biology, chemistry, and engineering.

Many Boy Scouts don't fit well into organized sports. It's not that parents don't try, it's that families are quickly exhausted and financially depleted going from baseball to hockey to football to soccer without igniting any deep interest or skill in the boy.

It's also not unusual that 30% of the boys in a scout troop are on an ADHD medication. Another 10% may be on meds for Asperger's Syndrome. Many of these families have limited social capital given the nature of the condition and the stress placed upon the family.

I believe that families exhibiting a combination of limited social capital and non-participation in organized team sports are at a huge disadvantage when it comes to promoting recreational assets like Bass Lake—losing out time after time to the well-organized, socially connected team sport participants.

The following excerpts taken from a letter written 38 years ago to the City Council illustrates the point.

October 12, 1978 "Treasure to Trash"

I have been a resident of St. Louis Park for 36 years. Since our two sons were old enough to trap muskrats at Bass Lake. I have been fascinated by the potential of this area as a unique recreational, nature, and wildlife opportunity. Some of the real old-timers told of fishing at Bass Lake. Wild pheasants, ducks, and flowers abounded there in the 60's.

We became deeply concerned in the late 60's when steady deterioration of the area became increasingly evident. Meetings to discuss the situation were held at the City Hall. We were greatly encouraged when a plan for development of Bass Lake was drawn up. Elaborate, detailed drawings were exhibited. Our group of concerned citizens was relieved in the belief that the encroachment and deterioration processes were to be turned around. To our great dismay, the 'project' ended right there.

We who have so closely followed the Bass Lake situation these past 10 years were recently shook up, or more accurately enraged by a recent article in Sun Newspaper quoting a councilman as follows: "The City should consider developing playing fields on the site instead of the proposed open space."

What do we who pray for the preservation and improvement of a priceless and unreplaceable treasure have to show for our concern and efforts: 1. Eleven years

of frustration. 2. An ugly dumping grounds. 3. A badly scarred lake. 4. Wildlife exiting before encroachment. 5. Still no concrete viable plan for the best and most sensible development of this unique treasure. God forbid burying it under a totally unnecessary ball diamond.

Signed: Otis Dypwick, Martin Fowler, Lee Humphrys, Jeffrey Dypwick

Concerned citizens today could write a similar letter. A multimillion dollar outdoor hockey rink is under construction across the street at the Rec Center. The proposal to use one million dollars of funds for soccer field renovation and flooding at Carpenter Park as part of the Bass Lake project is also under consideration.

The 1978 letter mentioned above and my experience growing up on the east side of Lake Harriet in the 1960's taught me two valuable lessons:

1. Don't expect banquet dinners and award ceremonies for environmental effort. The fight for natural recreational spaces is hard solitary work.
2. Champions must step forward. As a boy, I grew up next door to Clifton French. He helped build the Hennepin County Park Preserve system. He inspired my father and another neighbor to run for the Minneapolis Park Board. In 1968 they fought the battle for walking and biking paths around the city lakes, opening them up for the recreation of all citizens.

The Friends of Bass Lake is looking for champions on the SLP City Council; members who will lend a voice and lead the way. The reward for such leadership is only recognized in historical perspective and by the quiet gratitude of a long underserved group of St. Louis Park citizens.

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