

MacNeil, Jami

From: MacNeil, Jami
Sent: Wednesday, December 04, 2019 9:19 AM
To: Steven Cheff
Subject: RE: Sheepscot River

Dear Mr. Cheff,

Thank you for your comments regarding the construction of a boat ramp and pier system in Alna as proposed by Jeffrey Spinney. The Department is currently reviewing the application under Maine's Natural Resources Protection Act. The Department accepted the application for processing on September 9, 2019. The statutory deadline for the Department to reach a final decision on the application is January 7, 2020; however, a decision may be issued prior to that deadline. Written comments will be accepted until a decision is issued.

Your comments will be added to the file and will be considered during the review of the project. The Department's record, which includes the application of specific interest to you, is available to be viewed at any time. Feel free to contact the Department's File Room at (207) 287-7843 to request a day and time that is convenient for you to view the record.

You may contact me with additional concerns, questions, or comments. I can be reached at (207) 446-4894 or via email at jami.macneil@maine.gov.

Sincerely,

-Jami MacNeil

Environmental Specialist III
Bureau of Land Resources
Maine Department of Environmental Protection
(207) 446-4894 | jami.macneil@maine.gov

From: Steven Cheff <chezcheff@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 03, 2019 5:51 PM
To: MacNeil, Jami <Jami.MacNeil@maine.gov>
Subject: Sheepscot River

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From: Steven Cheff
Date: December 3, 2019
Re: Jeff Spinney's proposed boat launch and dock development in Alna, Maine
To: Jami.MacNeil@maine.gov

Dear Jami,

My name is Steven Cheff and I live on South Dyer Neck Road in Newcastle. I teach Chemistry and Physics at Lincoln Academy in Newcastle Maine. Many of my students live in Alna and along the river in Newcastle. My four children were all born in Maine and I have lived in Maine for decades.

I apologize for sharing this information at a late date in your process, but I just found out last week about Mr. Spinney plan to build a permanent concrete launch and large dock, and run a sportsman's club in Alna on the Sheepscot River about a quarter mile "as a crow flies" from my home.

The current use of the Sheepscot River north of reversing falls is much different than it was 50 years ago. In 2019, on a summer weekend there are many kayakers and canoeists paddling up and down the River. Above the bridge, The River is quiet, pristine and a treasure to those of us who live near it. The proposed development on the River would have a detrimental effect on the beauty and aesthetics of the area, in addition to a negative environmental impact on the entire watershed below Head Tide.

In the past 5+ years, I have only seen (and heard as it was quite loud) two motorized boats traveling up and down the River. I cannot imagine a constant barrage of boats every weekend. There are all kinds of waterfowl (geese, ducks) cormorants, Kingfishers, ospreys, owls, eagles and many other small birds who use the grasslands along the River as habitat. There are numerous mammals and a large number of fish species in addition to the invertebrates who use this River as essential habitat.

I am strongly opposed to the plan by Mr. Spinney to build a permanent boat launch and dock and on the upper reaches of the Sheepscot River. The River above reversing falls is not and never has been a suitable area for large motorboats, ski boats, and any other intrusive boats. In addition, a hunting club (Golden Ridge Sportsman's Club)with 25+ members using the facility sounds like commercial use, which is not allowed on the River.

My concerns and objections, are specifically as follows:

1. Aesthetics and current use of the River.

There are very few visible structures along the River from just above the village to Head Tide. The River is quiet, pristine and a treasure to those of us who live near it. Mr. Spinney's proposed development would disrupt this peace for the hundreds of folks who enjoy the River today. Mr. Spinney's proposal is not consistent with "existing conditions, use, and character of the area." There may have been barges, ski boats and the like many dozens of years ago, but that has not been the case for a long time. That said, I'm certain that these boats had a detrimental affect on the aesthetics and habitat of the river, whenever they were here.

2. Noise pollution

Active motorboats will destroy the peace and quiet that all of the residents enjoy living here. Detrimental effects of boating on marine fauna has recently been recognized, and linked to noise levels (Codarin, et al., 2009; Slabbekoorn, et al., 2010). Other effects may include strikes from propellers (Killgore, et al., 2011; Balazik et al., 2012) or pollution from outboard exhaust (Situ and Brown, 2013). Noise from boats may increase stress levels of fish (Smith, Kane & Popper, 2004). "the passage of boats may break up schools and cause increased activity and energy expenditure due to the movement away from the disturbance. Animals living within estuaries are particularly vulnerable to potential adverse effects of recreational boating because, relative to open coastal regions, they are often spatially restricted in terms of depths and width, especially during the high tide".

"Does boat traffic cause displacement of fish in estuaries?"

<https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1434/ML14345A583.pdf>

“Impacts of recreational motorboats on fishes: A review” (2014)

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261837999_Impacts_of_recreational_motorboats_on_fishes_A_review

3. Increased nonpoint pollution and shoreline erosion

The Sheepscot River Watershed Management Plan, written in 2007 concludes that nonpoint pollution is one of the biggest risks to the health of the Sheepscot River.

<http://www.kcsxcd.org/Projects/Sheepscot/WHOLE%20PLAN%20Jan26.07.pdf>

The proposed development will increase the release of oil and gas into the watershed. The boat wakes will also hasten the erosion of shoreline.

4. Introduction of Invasive species.

It sounds as if many of the people who wish to use the River could possibly be from out of state. This greatly increases the risk of the introducing of non-native species into the ecosystem.

“the use of recreational boats as vectors of aquatic invasive organisms is very real and has created major problems to the ecology of aquatic systems”.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261837999_Impacts_of_recreational_motorboats_on_fishes_A_review

5. Disruption of habitat

The upper reaches of the brackish estuary of the Sheepscot River, from the reversing falls to Head Tide, contain some pristine breeding grounds for fish, birds and many invertebrates.

There are multiple small inlets on the River (Ben Brook, Trout Brook) which are guarded from the general waves and currents of the River. Since most boats can only ride the River near high tide, the ensuing wakes would cause significant damage to riparian areas that rarely deal with large waves. Boat wakes at high tide would do immeasurable damage to nesting sites, spawning grounds

Here are a few references.

“Boating activity is a primary disturbance, as it induces biological stress and morphological changes along the coastline. This high-energy environment that boat wakes create has resulted in loss of surrounding oyster reefs and salt marsh vegetation, ultimately leading to shoreline and habitat erosion”.

“Mitigating Erosional Effects Induced by Boat Wakes with Living Shorelines”

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/10/2/436/htm>

“Review of boat wake wave impacts on shoreline erosion and potential solutions for the Chesapeake Bay”

http://ccrm.vims.edu/2017_BoatWakeReviewReport.pdf

How do boats affect aquatic ecosystems?

“Boats interact with the aquatic environment by a variety of mechanisms, including emissions and exhaust, propeller contact, turbulence from the propulsion system, waves produced by movement, noise, and movement itself. In turn, each of these impacting mechanisms may have multiple effects

on the aquatic ecosystem. Sediment re-suspension, water pollution, disturbance of fish and wildlife, destruction of aquatic plants, and shoreline erosion are the major areas of concern”

“The Effects of Motorized Watercraft on Aquatic Ecosystems”

http://www.trpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2010-WI-Dept-of-Natural-Resources_UW-Boats-effects-on-ecosystems.pdf

6. The proposal is not consistent with the provision in Alna’s Shoreland Zoning Ordinance (SZO) that does not allow permanent structures (cement boat launch and permanent pilings) in the Resource Protection Zone

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Steven Cheff
278 South Dyer Neck Road
Newcastle, Maine, 04553