

DEEP CREEK DISPATCH

Winter, 2005

Newsletter of the
Property Owners' Association
of Deep Creek Lake, Incorporated

Dam and Hydroelectric Plant Sold

Brascon, a Canadian asset management company with property and power generation interests has reached an agreement to purchase the DCL dam and hydroelectric generating plant from Reliant Energy. The transaction is dependent on regulatory approvals and is expected to close in the second quarter of 2005. Brascon has \$20 billion ownership interests in 70 office properties throughout North America and London UK. It owns 120 power generating plants with an output of 2,600 megawatts. Simple math shows an average of just over 21 mgw. per plant. Thus Deep Creek's 18 mgw. is in line with the rest of their holdings.

Membership

POA membership for 2004 totaled 1,329, including 41 who have already paid through 2005. Our mailing list totals 4,736, and we note that 291 of you claim Garrett County as your primary residence. This edition of *The Dispatch* will be sent to all 4,736 of you, but the remainder of the 2005 issues will go only to dues paying members. View past issues of *The Dispatch* at www.deepcreeklakepoa.com. Your 2005 POA dues notice has been included in this issue along with a return envelope. To determine if you are one of the 41 who have already paid for 2005, just check the mailing label on this (or any issue) of *The Dispatch*. The number after your name is the last year for which you paid POA dues.

Property Taxes

Those of you whose lake property is south of the Glendale bridge should have received a notice of reassessment. The good news is that you made a great investment when you purchased property at DCL. The bad news is that you will be paying a lot more property tax. Based on recent sales, land values have increased 83% for lake front properties, 125% for back lots with docking rights, lake influenced for example, view lot, properties are up 118%, and condos up 53%. Unless your increase is a lot more than these percentages, your

chance of a successful appeal would appear slim. When the buildings are factored in, a typical increase in the DCL area is 50-55%. For comparison, the percent change in the Oakland Mt. Lake Park area is 14 to 18%. The increase is phased in over three years, and if your DCL property is your permanent residence, the Homestead regulation limits your tax increase to 5% per year.

For example, a home on Marsh Hill Rd. sold in February of 2002 for \$305,000 and was resold exactly two years later for \$472,000, over 1.5 times as much! Another property on Lake Shore Dr. increased the same percentage in only 13 months. A new property on Silver Tree Lane increased by the same factor in only nine months! Another property on Lake Shore Drive went up by a factor of 1.2 in only one month! Talk about speculation!

There are two factors which determine how much property tax you have to pay—the assessment, and the tax rate. Your POA, the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, and the Board of Realtors have all taken independent positions requesting the County Commissioners to reduce the tax rate to or below the constant yield level. To achieve constant yield, the tax rate would be lowered so the County would receive the same amount of property tax income this year as last.

The Commissioners have held the tax rate the same for several years, but because of increased assessments the County's income has also increased each year. For comparison, the Garrett County tax rate for 2003/2004 was \$1.036; the constant yield rate for 2004/2005 would be \$0.977. A constant yield rate would lower your tax bill due July 2005 by over 5%.

News About Sewers

A contract has been awarded to Beitzel Corp. for expansion of the DCL area sewage treatment plant. Although almost twenty firms requested bid packages, there was only one bid. The bid was just under the consulting engineer's estimate. Construction of Phase I is to start May 2 with completion in 18 months. This work will increase the capacity to 1.5 mgd (million

gallons per day). Phase II, to be completed later, will increase capacity to 2.2 mgd.

A recent Commissioner's meeting adopted several policies. These may be viewed at www.co.garrett.md.us. First select Public Utilities, then click on 2005 policies. Basically, as it affects your bottom line, the sewer capacity fee remains at \$6,500, the connection fee is set at \$3,000. If you need a grinder pump, and almost everyone will, they cost about \$3,700. If you are to receive water service, there will be a capacity fee of \$2,800. These costs are fixed, although the grinder pump cost might vary a little. The total is \$16,000. Then you have to hire a contractor to dig the ditch, install the grinder pump, and run the pipes. The Public Utilities Department estimates these costs as \$1,200 each for the water and sewer lines, adding up to \$18,400. Clearly these costs depend on your individual situation, length of line, depth of trench, which contractor you hire, and any cost of landscaping. We suspect that \$18,000 or so is the least, and some could certainly pay upwards of \$20,000 for the whole deal.

Property owners in the Sandy Beach area, among the first to be affected, are concerned that the developers are getting a big break. Newly developed properties will pay the same fees as existing properties, and there is a plan, although apparently not "cast in concrete," that developers will pay approximately \$5 million to install a main trunk line. However, undeveloped properties served by new sewers on the mountain top and elsewhere will increase greatly in value and provide nice profits to developers and increased tax revenue to the County.

Maryland State law provides that if a sewer line passes adjacent to your property, you must connect. The County Commissioners apparently have the authority (some legal dispute here) to set a time table. Many residents with relatively new septic systems that are operating properly, are hoping for a big extension.

There are also provisions that existing homes (not new development) may apply for extended payments. The suggested arrangement is 10 years at 5%.

2005 United Way Campaign Kicked off in Garrett County

The fifth year of the local United Way campaign started in October. The Board of Directors of the POA has endorsed this charity. We do not give our funds but urge our members to do so. To obtain United Way monies, an agency must provide information showing specific benefit to Garrett County residents. The agencies supported and their program descriptions are presented in the enclosed brochure. The United Way and the POA Board appreciate the past support of POA members. You have been leaders in group giving the

last three years. Please fill out the attached form and send your contribution to the United Way in the enclosed postage paid envelope. The money given in Garrett County stays in Garrett County.

Windpower

The two projects previously approved for Garrett County are going ahead. Clipperwind plans 67 windmills on Backbone Mt., and Synergics plans 24 more. A protest group, known as Friends of Backbone Mt., (aka interveners) has been very active in opposition. Some environmental groups are against more windmills, and some environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club, favor windmills. Both sides have issued what appear to be exaggerated letters to the editor, press releases, paid advertisements, etc. Much of the information is "spin." Therefore it is difficult to get fair and accurate information to form an intelligent position.

Because of all the controversy, the County Commissioners issued a statement. "At this time it is the board's desire to limit wind power development to the two current projects." They have asked the Department of Planning and Land Development to look into options for limiting the development of additional wind power projects in Garrett County. We suspect that the options are limited due to the lack of County wide zoning.

As previously reported in *The Dispatch*, study of topographic maps suggests that only a few locations on DCL will be able to see the windmills. But most lake area mountain top homes will be able to see them. Basically, if you can see Backbone Mt. from your lake property, you will see windmills. If you can not identify Backbone Mt., you will need to get a good topographical map, and consider the height of the windmills. In general the top of the blade will be 394 ft. above ground level. On a clear day the Tucker County windmills near Thomas, WV, can be seen from the top of Wisp Mt. near the new pump house.

Recent studies showed that an unexpected number of bats have been killed by windmills. Reported numbers from near-by WV seem to vary between 1,500 and 4,000 per year. Exact numbers are hard to come by, and when there are two zeros on the end it is most probable that we have an estimate or extrapolation. The good news is that windmill officials and wildlife ecologists are optimistic that several technologies can be used to lower the death rate.

Some recent data that has been released shows 4 bird deaths per windmill. Again the number is extrapolated, since the number of birds found dead is lower. Presumably some dead birds fall prey to scavengers before they are counted. A migration study using radar and acoustic sampling has been completed, but the data has not been released. The company that sponsored the data offered to release the data a year ago,

but some of the interveners (those against) did not want the data released. Perhaps they thought it would undermine their case. In the mean time, the company does not want to release the data, apparently because of a competitive business situation.

In related action, the Garrett County Commissioners established a new building permit fee for utility and public communication towers—including radio, TV, cell phones towers, wind turbines, etc. The fee is \$1 per foot with a minimum fee of \$60. The measurement will include maximum height with a vertical blade.

Wake Surfing Warning

This is the latest water toy. The wakesurfer is basically a modified surfboard. The surfer gets on the board with a **life jacket** and is towed by an **inboard** motor boat. He needs to get very close to the boat, then the surfer lets go the rope and rides the wave. This is very **dangerous** if done behind an outboard or an IO boat because the surfer is too close to the propeller! Be careful.

Deep Creek Lake Manager Retires

Paul Durham, lake manager since 1989, retired effective the beginning of January. A permanent replacement has not been named. Paul oversaw the design and construction of the Discovery Center, was involved with the State's acquisition of the lake in 2000, the buy downs, the conservation easement, and worked effectively with the DCL Policy and Review Board. We understand that Paul will remain in the area and wish him success and happiness in retirement.

Garrett Performing Arts Center

Back in January, a board of directors was elected for the Garrett Performing Arts Center Inc. (GPAC). The board is seeking 501-C3 (non-profit) status, and is updating a 1999 feasibility study and market survey. The board has contracted with Lucinda Williams, who served as a Baltimore Symphony Vice President, to serve as executive director. Lucinda Williams is now a Garrett County resident. In February, a request for proposal for architectural consulting services was published by the Garrett County Procurement Office. Over 50 architects expressed interest. In early March 15 of those attended a pre-proposal conference. Proposals are due March 22. County and GPAC Board representatives will share responsibility of proposal evaluation. The architectural firm selected will create perspective drawings of the exterior and interior of the envisioned center. These drawings, along with a programing statement and

project narrative will greatly assist the GPAC Board in its mission to raise an estimated eight million dollars needed to build the Center.

Some time back, the Garrett County Commissioners announced plans to build an exhibit hall in an area more or less behind the Garrett Eight Cinema. The performing arts center may be located in this area. In the architectural requirements for the exhibit hall, the commissioners included plans to make the site suitable for a complimentary facility. The two buildings could share parking, restrooms and infrastructure.

Garrett Lakes Arts Festival

The Garrett Lakes Arts Festival has published an ambitious schedule for 2005.

- March 18 Garrett County's Best
The Ultimate Talent Show
Garrett College, 8 PM, \$5
- April 9 Duquesne University Tamburitans
Garrett College, 7 PM, FREE
- May 6 Cashore Marionettes
Garrett College, 1 PM, Students \$2
- June 18 Robin & Linda Williams
Workshop, Garrett College, 3 PM \$30
Concert, Garrett College, 8 PM \$15
Students \$5, Workshop & Concert \$40
- June 26 Annual Student Piano Recital
Will O' the Wisp, 3 PM, FREE
- July 4 Garrett Community Concert Band
Garrett College Tent. 7:30 PM, FREE
Fireworks 9:30 PM
- July 5-8 Chautauqua Living History Portrayals
Garrett College Tent
7 PM Local Musicians
7:30 Chautauqua, FREE
- Aug 20-7 Music on the Mountain
The Deep Creek Symphony Orchestra
- Aug. 20 Stravinsky & Copeland
Garrett College, 8 PM, \$22, Youth \$15
- Aug. 21 1812 Overture & Fireworks
Slopes of Wisp, 8 PM, Adults \$15, Youth \$5
- Aug. 26 Mozart, Bernstein, Beethoven
Wisp Lodge, 8 PM, Adults \$22, Youth \$10
- Aug. 27 Borodin, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky
Wisp Lodge, 8 PM, Adults \$22, Youth \$10
- Sept. 24 The Alliance Chorus- Barbershop
Garrett College, 7:30 PM, Adults \$15
Youth \$5

Summer workshops and camps are also scheduled. For more information call the GLAF office at 301-387-3082, or check their web site at www.artsandentertainment.org. Season subscriptions are also available.

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Bears

The much debated bear hunt took place this fall. There were to be 30 bears taken. In the first day the hunters took 20. The DNR was afraid that a like number would be taken the second day, so they closed the season. Since it was apparently so easy to find bears, could there be more bears here than the DNR study estimated? We note without comment that there were nine bears killed on highways through early June of 2004, and for much of that time the bears were inactive in hibernation!

Recently, Delegate George Edwards submitted legislation that would require the DNR to introduce black bears to each Maryland County by October 2012. He said a DNR map indicates there is good to

fair bear habitat in every county. Edwards submitted his bill after a Prince George's and Anne Arundel delegate submitted a bill to stop all bear hunts. George said, "We'll share our bears with them and see if they still want to stop the hunt."

Trail Benefit

The third annual Treats of Garrett County will be held Monday May 23, 6 to 9 PM and the Wisp Lodge. The County's finest cuisine will be served by local chefs, with entertainment provided by DJ Jonny Rock. There will be a cash bar and door prizes. Advance tickets for adults are \$20 and may be obtained at the Garrett County Visitors Center or participating restaurants. Proceeds benefit the Garrett County Recreational Trails.