



**Statehouse:**

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**Tim Schaffer**  
**State Representative**  
**77<sup>th</sup> District**

**Committees:**

Public Utilities, *Chair*  
Agriculture and Rural Development  
Ways and Means  
Council on Un-reclaimed Strip Mines

April 14, 2015

Director Jim Zehringer  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
2045 Morse Road  
Columbus, OH 43229-6693

Dear Director Zehringer,

As I meet with more and more citizens in the Buckeye Lake region, I have recorded their questions and suggestions to pass along to you.

Can you please ask your staff to address each of them? The local residents are in need of answers and I am doing my best to help serve as a communications link with them.

These questions and suggestions follow below:

- **Urgent Public Safety Concern:** Public safety is being compromised by the low lake level.
  - The Millersport Fire Department tells me they can not operate their fire boat at the current lake level. (See photos.)
  - MFD has changed out their 500 gpm pump for a lighter 200 gpm pump in hopes that the boat will float and be able to maneuver.
    - That change in capacity severely undermines the Fire Department's ability to fight fires from the water side, taking them down from three hoses to a single hose.
      - Will the home owners and business owners suffer insurance increases?
  - The Fire Department also has off-loaded much of their rescue equipment (hoses, ropes, life vests, water rescue suits, more) due to the shallow water level.
    - This change severely affects their ability to mount water rescues, which are frequent in a recreational lake community.
- **Urgent Business Concern:** Can ODNR dredge boating lanes around the businesses?
  - Many businesses depend upon boat traffic for customers.
    - Businesses that have expressed concern directly are the marinas, restaurants and bars.

- One restaurant says 75 percent of his business comes from boaters docking at his facility.
- The lake appears to be going lower than winter pool where the Governor said it would remain. Is it true and what can be done to address that?
  - There is concern among local citizens that ODNR's definition of winter pool is different than the locals'.
- What is the timeframe for the project?
- Can we shorten the time frame to complete the dam project?
  - What can we do to speed the project along as fast as possible?
- How long will it take to secure bonds for the project?
  - Will bonds be sold as the project goes along, or are the bonds sold all at once?
    - What assurances do we have that the funds will be available in future administrations and general assemblies?
- Can we fix the weakest, most vulnerable parts of the dam so we can increase lake level sooner as the less vulnerable sections are fixed?
- Fix the west wall, which appears most vulnerable, and then filling the lake back up partially
  - Dredging 20 feet deep has been suggested as a way to save fish and make the lake navigable if we can fix the west wall/vulnerable parts of the structure.
- I have heard from an engineer that the original cost of this dam repair was estimated in the 1990s at \$6 million, \$28 million in 2004 and finally up to \$150 million today.
  - Were the prior estimates well thought out and why the large variance?
  - Was \$28 million ever appropriated in 2004? If so, where is it now?
- Another engineer opined that a sea wall is a bad design idea—encourages wave action that limits skiing, is more expensive and is much more expensive and complex than simply placing “rick rack” on the structure.
- Are we building an additional 20 ft. wall from the homes' foundations to the wall?
  - Is this extra 20 feet eliminated if we use the hydraulic press?
- What is the expected lifespan of a sheet wall design? I heard 50 years....
- Did DLZ complete a design in the past, and if so why was it not used?
- Walnut Local Schools, which is on the verge of going into fiscal emergency, has a levy on the May ballot.



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- Are dam residents responsible for removing their docks?
  - ODNR leadership promised me several years ago that ODNR would remove the docks and give the residents the option of having ODNR save the material on the residents' side of the dam in neat stacks at ODNR's expense.
  - ODNR also agreed to fund or replace docks they remove, limited to the amount it would cost to build a basic dock.
- What is the overall longterm plan for Buckeye Lake State Park and the dam? Short term plan?
- Is a state-built or state-owned marina or lodge any part of this Buckeye Lake dam project?
  - Is the state building one or both to further damage our local businesses?
  - Did the State buy Smitty's?
    - If so, what is the plan for the property?
- Is a bike trail/sidewalk/roadway on top of the dam in front of residents' homes part of any plan?
  - I have a very serious concern about residents' safety if the answer is yes. We should not create of crime problem where there is no reason to build a roadway.
- Dredging—Go deep!
  - Is ODNR planning to dredge the lake deeper?
  - Deeper dredging will help eliminate the algae, is easier to do when the lake level is low and will improve the use of the lake.
  - How will dredges operate when they are getting stuck in the low water level?
  - Perhaps place the dredge material behind a new wall being contemplated?
  - What is the 6' deep X35' wide dredging for?
- As the water level decreases and oxygen is eliminated, killing fish, how does ODNR plan to clean the fish up around the homes and especially the businesses serving food?
- An island owner wants to know how they are to get to their homes?
- Since the Lake is lower, more unusable shoreline will be available for geese. How will the ODNR deal with all of the geese and the health and environmental issues that their excretion produces?

- Acton Lake at Huston Woods had its dam worked on without a drawdown. How was this accomplished when Buckeye Lake has to be drawn down?
  - When the ODNR was asked about it, the resident was told that the Park had too many annual visitors to close the Lake. Buckeye Lake is primarily a summer home Lake with over 18,000 residents in the 3 county Buckeye Lake Area which means most of the people in this area do not get counted at the boat ramps. Has this figure meant anything to the ODNR in their planning or are the only count done through boat ramp counters?
- How does the Buckeye Lake people get a “voice at the table?”
- When is the letter coming out that ODNR promised homeowners about docks regulations and speed regulations?
- Where will ODNR post speed/horsepower regulations? At the ramps?
  - How will ODNR control speed around Cranberry Bog?
- Is the lake office going to be open all year around?
- Will air boats be allowed?
- What is the Army Corps of Engineers’ role in Buckeye lake dam rehabilitation project?
  - Why is the Corps renting trailers fro up to 40 people capacity?

General Questions

- Where do the dock fees go?
  - Rumor is they are deposited in the GRF and not used for the lake.
  - Does Buckeye Lake get the benefit in any way of the dock fees?

Sincerely,



Tim Schaffer  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77<sup>th</sup> District