

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

**1. How does the MDNR define a boating access site?**

*Answer: The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Parks and Recreation Division, identifies a boating access site as having a launch ramp, parking area, vehicular maneuver area, and sanitary facilities such as a vault toilet (a typical “public access site” may provide only some or none of these).*

**2. How are launch ramp and parking space quantities determined?**

*Answer: The MDNR, Parks and Recreation Division guidelines recommend up to twenty-five (25) vehicle/trailer parking spaces per boat launch ramp lane. The parking space quantities are based on a guideline of one parking space per 15 water surface acres. The MDNR, Parks and Recreation Division also considers the size of the parcel, topography, and existing shoreline development. Other important considerations include existing boating access sites on the same waterbody, local population density, and the number of local boat registrations.*

**3. Why was this site selected?**

*Answer: The MDNR owns, and was prepared to develop, the Outlet site for boating access. As a representative speaking for local interests, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy asked the MDNR to purchase the present site. This was due to the ecological effects that could occur if the project commenced. The present site showed significantly less wetland, and dredging would be less as well.*

**4. How many launch ramp lanes will there be?**

*Answer: There will be four launch ramp lanes.*

**5. How many parking spaces will there be?**

*Answer: There will be 101 vehicle/trailer spaces of which 39 will be paved and 62 will be gravel. Four of the paved spaces will be ADA accessible while one will be designated for law enforcement. There will also be 26 paved vehicle only spaces whereby one will be an ADA accessible space. Crystal Lake can sustain approximately 658 vehicle/trailer spaces according to the MDNR, Parks and Recreation Division guideline of 15 water surface acres per vehicle/trailer parking spot.*

**6. Will dredging be necessary for this project and if so, how much and how deep?**

*Answer: Yes, dredging will be necessary. Based on the November, 2003 plans and according to the MDEQ permit, approximately 1,200 cubic yards would need to be dredged from the lake to achieve approximately 4 feet of water depth at the end of the launch ramp. Future maintenance dredging may also be necessary.*

**7. How will silt be controlled during and after construction?**

*Answer: As a part of the site design and construction process, both temporary (silt fence, siltation curtain) and permanent (establishing turf) soil erosion and sediment control measures will be implemented.*

**8. Will this site be barrier free and comply with Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)?**

*Answer: Yes, the site will meet ADAAG including providing accessible parking, accessible vault toilets (in launching area and in upper parking area), accessible skid piers, and accessible routes between these elements.*

**9. How will the steep slopes and grade changes be overcome?**

*Answer: The site has been designed to take advantage of the relatively level area at the base of the hill near the launch, for barrier free parking, a maneuver area, and a vault toilet facility. The level area at the top of the hill will be utilized for parking, both vehicle and vehicle with trailer, and for a second barrier free vault toilet facility. Stairs will be available to provide access from the upper parking area to the launching area.*

**10. How much wetland cut and fill will there be and where will this take place?**

*Answer: Approximately 25% (or 0.3 acres) of the shoreline wetland at the site will be affected as a result of the proposed project. 75% will be preserved and will continue to function in its current capacity as a buffer area. The project includes wetland mitigation at the Outlet Property on a 2:1 ratio. For every 1 acre of wetland utilized, two acres will be created into a new wetland. This replacement ratio is higher than required by Part 303, Wetlands Protection, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended.*

**11. Has the amount of wetland affected been minimized?**

*Answer: Yes, the amount of wetland affected has been minimized. In order to minimize impacts to the wetlands along the immediate lakeshore, the project has been designed to concentrate impacts within the lower quality portions of the wetland.*

**12. Is it possible to build a mitigation area down near the lake?**

*Answer: No, there is not enough room.*

**13. How much will the project cost and where does the funding come from?**

*Answer: The project is estimated to cost approximately \$1,400,000. Funding will come from the Michigan State Waterways Commission, which collects money from marine fuel taxes, boat registrations, and user fees.*

**14. What is the time frame for completion of this project?**

*Answer: The time frame for construction has not been determined.*

**15. Who will operate and maintain the site?**

*Answer: The MDNR, Parks and Recreation Division, which operates hundreds of boating access sites throughout the state, will operate and maintain this site.*

**16. Who is going to police/enforce the site, and prevent access to the trail?**

*Answer: The policing of this boating access site will be a cooperative effort between MDNR Parks and Recreation Rangers, MDNR Conservation Officers, and local law enforcement.*

**17. What about the safety of the trail users and the traffic cutting through?**

*Answer: The safety of the trail crossing will be dealt with through the installation of a designated cross walk which will include pavement markings and signage.*

**18. Have threatened and endangered species been reviewed?**

*Answer: Yes, the MDNR, Stewardship Program reviewed the site and no species of concern were found to be present. Further investigation by additional environmental specialists concluded that no threatened or endangered species are at risk.*

**19. Will an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Study be done?**

*Answer: Neither an Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Study will not be done. The MDNR has reviewed all the environmental impacts to this site using both internal experts, and our design consultant, and found that these additional studies are not necessary, nor are they are required.*

**20. What about the introduction of invasive species into Crystal Lake from boats?**

*Answer: The risk from invasive species has been present for some time already, due to the existing public access site on the lake where boat launching has occurred. Any potential increase in invasive species risk, through the addition of this boating access site, is negligible. Invasive species such as zebra mussel and Eurasian watermilfoil already exist.*

**21. What about performing a Quality Assessment on the flora/fauna of the site?**

*Answer: A Flora/Fauna Assessment has been done which covers the different types of existing vegetation, including native, non-native, and invasive species. The wetland immediately adjacent to the shoreline consists of cottonwood, green ash, poison ivy, garlic mustard, jewelweed, sandbar willow, red osier dogwood, and bulrush. The wetland south of the railroad ballast contains northern white cedar, balsam poplar, willow, red osier dogwood, sensitive fern and jewelweed. The uplands at the shoreline have cottonwood, white pine, trembling aspen, honeysuckle, garlic mustard, herb robert, chives, spotted knapweed, and raspberry.*

**22. What vegetation is to be removed or added (native/invasive species, aquatic, cottonwood, etc...)?**

*Answer: Through this project exotic and invasive plants will be removed and only native plant species are to be planted. This will assist in establishing a native plant region while reducing the exotic and invasive species already present. Numbers of existing small shrubs and trees will also be saved such as dogwoods and cedars. The proposed native seed mix for the site will be managed to allow for no-mow areas. This contributes to the introduction of natural habitat species while at the same time reduces the resources expended on maintaining the grass.*

**23. Will an increase in shoreline erosion occur?**

*Answer: Any increase in erosion during the construction process will be negligible. In addition, proper temporary soil erosion and sedimentation control measures will be used to protect the site during the construction process. Also, permanent erosion control will be done through vegetative plantings and rip-rap.*

**24. How will fish (whitefish spawning, bass and bluegill substrate) in Crystal Lake be affected by the construction and dredging?**

*Answer: Dredging for the boat launch will have very minimal impact on spawning fish. It is only a fraction of the available spawning habitat on the whole lake. Bluegills could spawn there, but most of their habitat is on the extreme east end of the lake near the village boat launch. There are no records of largemouth bass in Crystal Lake, but there are smallmouth bass, which spawn in deeper water and therefore would not be impacted by dredging. Crystal Lake is a deep oligotrophic lake inhabited primarily by coldwater species and this project would have no impact on their recruitment or survival. (Tom Rozich, Fisheries Biologist Supervisor, MDNR)*

*\*MDNR, Fisheries Division has stocked this lake with fish for at least the past 25 years. In 2005 alone, 105,932 fish were planted into Crystal Lake on four different dates at different locations on the lake.*

**25. How will the runoff problems from oil, gas, sediment from erosion, and other pollutants be handled?**

*Answer: Runoff from the parking lot and roads will be managed using a Vortech System. This system's primary purpose is to remove any suspended solids prior to discharge into the water.*

**26. Will the Vortech System handle the amount that the parking lot size will collect?**

*Answer: The basin was sized by the project engineers and will provide substantially more capacity than is necessary given the area of impervious surfaces on the site.*

**27. Why is this the best design?**

*Answer: This is the best design because this project will allow for the creation of a safe, user friendly launch facility that will provide a much needed access to one of the largest inland lakes in the State. The plan for a four lane ramp meets minimal guidelines for Crystal Lake. Also, for every ramp, it is a MDNR, Parks and Recreation Division guideline to have 25 parking spots. The dredging amount is the necessary amount in order to provide adequate width, depth and length for most water craft. Each ramp requires access via a barrier-free skid pier, making a total of three skid piers. After presenting this to local community members through public meetings, strong public support has been received.*

**28. Is this too large of a boating access site for this lake?**

*Answer: No, this is not too large of a boating access site for Crystal Lake. Crystal Lake is one of the largest inland lakes in the State of Michigan and user demand continues to increase due to the quality of water and abundant public fishery*

resources. MDNR, Parks and Recreation Division Design Guidelines show that Crystal Lake can hold approximately 658 boats. Therefore up to 658 trailerable parking spaces could be made available around the lake.

**29. Is there another place on the lake that is more suitable?**

*Answer: No, we are not aware of any other suitable land where there is a willing seller.*

**30. Is the MDNR required to follow Benzonia Township Zoning Ordinances?**

*Answer: No, but the MDNR is willing to work with the township to address any ordinance issues that relate to this boating access site.*

**31. Does the MDNR plan to give operating authority over to the County or Township?**

*Answer: The MDNR has reviewed this and if either would like to operate the site, then the MDNR is willing to enter into discussions.*

**32. What about rules/regulations governing the site such as hours of operation, alcoholic beverages, etc. adopted by Benzie County or affected Townships?**

*Answer: Due to this being a MDNR owned site, the MDNR has a list of regulations that pertain to all State owned lands, as well as boating access sites. These regulations will be posted at the site and include the following unlawful acts:*

*“a. to moor or raft off a state dock without having paid the docking fees authorized by the department for use of the facility.”*

*“b. to enter, use, or occupy the premises during the hours of 11pm to 4am daily where such closing hours are posted on the premises; or to swim, wade, or bathe when specifically prohibited by notices posted on the premises.”*

**33. Why can't other existing public access sites be improved, such as in Beulah?**

*Answer: Other sites do not provide adequate boating access to Crystal Lake, including room for vehicle/trailer parking, maneuvering area, and barrier-free accessibility. This includes the launch in Beulah which does not have enough room for all the necessary features of a boating access site.*

**34. Are any other boating access sites planned to be built on Crystal Lake by the MDNR?**

*Answer: The MDNR's intent is to provide adequate public boating access to Crystal Lake. Currently this plan on the MDNR property is the only one being pursued, however the MDNR would not eliminate the possibility of providing additional boating access to Crystal Lake.*

**35. Why spend money on a project when the State is under a budget deficit?**

*Answer: The money to develop this and other state sponsored boating access sites is not generated from the General (tax) Fund, but from the Michigan State Waterways (restricted) Fund. This money is derived from boat registrations, marine fuel taxes, and user fees.*

**Current Status:**

A hearing occurred on Tuesday, February 14, 2006 whereby the judge asked the plaintiff to provide a write-up describing the prosecution's challenge (remaining counts III, IV, and V). On April 21<sup>st</sup>, the plaintiff submitted a Supplemental Brief. On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Attorney General's office sent MDNR's Response to Plaintiff's Supplemental Brief in Opposition to Defendant MDNR's Motion for Partial Summary Disposition. In August 2006, the Judge issued an opinion to dismiss Counts III and IV. An MDEQ Administrative Hearing is scheduled to occur in September 2006, to review the challenge on the issuance of the MDEQ permit (Count V). A decision on the propriety of the permit will ultimately be issued by the MDEQ Director and reviewable by the c