

Task Force Report

Safety, Water Quality, Fishing and Recreation

Task Force Volunteers: Jim Ransom, Chairman; Marcia Ransom, George Forrester, Andy Hutter, Vern Hay, Arnold Cabrera, Lisbeth Cabrera, Sylvia Murphy, Joanne Telford, Don Telford, Dennis Nelson.

This Task Force held two meetings: the first meeting was Dec. 10, 2005, in the Kaw Room at the Hays House, with all the above in attendance. Another meeting with a subcommittee consisting of Jim Ransom, Andy Hutter and George Forrester, and attended also by Master Plan Coordinator Curt Brungardt, was held Feb. 3, 2006, at the Kansas Wildlife and Parks (KWP) Headquarters at Council Grove Reservoir, so that we could interact with key personnel from the Community Fishing Assistance Program (CFAP). State personnel attending were CFAP Director Jessica Mounts, headquartered in Pratt, KS, and Craig Johnson, the KWP biologist who will be studying CGCL and making recommendations in the future. Also attending was Randy Benteman, who is the Natural Resources Officer for the reservoir and our lake, and who carries out law enforcement activity at the lake and is a resource for water safety-related issues. *The following report combines discussion and priorities assigned by the Task Force at its first meeting, with additional information obtained from the subcommittee meeting and from research conducted by the chairman and others.*

Priority I : Recreation, Public Safety and Fishery Management

- The Council Grove Lake Association (CGLA) should endorse existing safety-related rules and regulations included in City ordinances. State laws relating to boating and swimming should be regularly enforced, and an increased effort should be made to train new boaters (both children and adults) in safe practices. Leaseholders are primarily responsible for making certain that their children and visitors are of legal age to operate watercraft and have completed required state water safety instruction. *KDWP personnel have volunteered to set up an “on the water” safety instruction program at the lake.* (Action needed: arrangement for this by City or by CGLA). Short term.
- Safety-related regulations need to be frequently publicized.
- Action needed: include safety regulations in mailings sent by City to all leaseholders on a yearly basis. Short term.
- Action needed: the Task Force recommends that a “black box” warning be included in each issue of the Lake Association Newsletter. These can be built around infractions noted by Officer Randy Benteman in the course of his patrol duties and should emphasize correct boating etiquette and lawful operation, etc. These safety-related notices can also be posted on the CGLA web site. Short term.
- The City has provided numbers for boats registered at the lake in 2002 and 2005, but these figures contain a lot of interpolations, as no clear-cut record-keeping system was ever used. As best we can determine, there are between 450 and 600 resident and non-resident watercraft registered at the lake, and approximately 100

jet skis. These figures are probably low. The Task Force has concerns that weekend boating may pose a safety issue due to increasing numbers of boaters. A *study is needed* to determine “Best Use” policies to promote safety. It is agreed that the City and CGLA should be proactive in this area and not wait until a severe or fatal accident occurs. A plurality of Task Force members opposed enlarging the high-speed boating area of the lake for safety reasons at this time. Intermediate term.

- Action is needed to provide increasing Lake Patrol oversight and enforcement of safety rules, especially during weekends. Short term.
- ***Fishery management*** will be considerably improved by a study of lake fish populations and habitat, already underway and directed by KDWP Regional Biologist Craig Johnson, who has met with Task Force representatives and outlined his plans. The lake was last sampled in 2003. Now, since CGCL is a part of the Community Fisheries Assistance Program (CFAP), more frequent and intensive surveys will be undertaken. Preliminary information indicates that the population of key game fish species is declining. Action needed: begin a stocking program based on fish survey results. Improve fish habitat in consultation with City and CGLA. *A questionnaire regarding lake user preferences for fishery development is recommended by the Task Force.* Short and Long term.

Priority II : Water Quality, Environmental Issues and Water Level

- *Task Force recommends that the City should consider alternative water sourcing, such as from the federal reservoir.* Recent information suggests that new water purification equipment used by the city works best with water having higher sediment content, so there may be strong reasons for the City to make this change. Use of lake water by the City averages about 160 million gallons per year, or about 10% of the draw-down seen. About 90% is due to evaporation. Short/Intermediate term.
- We endorse the continued requirement that persons applying chemicals to lawns have proper training and use only approved chemicals. *The City (or CGLA) should publish a list of chemicals* commonly marketed for lawn and garden use, with comments on which ones may pose the greatest threat to water quality/aquatic life. Short term.
- Similarly, we recommend that *restrictions compatible with the Clean Water Act be placed on any chemical applications* made by anyone in the drainage area of CGCL. Specifically, the municipal airport was sprayed with some substance last year (witnesses and photos available). City Ordinances regarding chemical use in these areas should be created, if existing ones are unclear, and a permit system should be considered to control such activity. Short term.
- Leaseholders should be responsible stewards of their property. This means avoid disposing of leaves, fish waste, grass clipping and other substances in the lake. Short and Long term.
- *The City (or succeeding authority) should consider hiring a qualified environmental biologist to study the entire lake and drainage area, with a view in*

- mind to determine what Best Practices could be adopted to help stabilize the water level and maintain water quality.
- Ongoing action is needed to *control the resident Canada Goose population at the lake*. This population is increasing and causes fouling of docks, boat ramps and lawns. ***Leaseholders should not feed these geese or provide breeding habitat for them***. The lake is increasingly becoming a refuge in the winter for large numbers of waterfowl, especially geese. *We recommend further study in conjunction with KDWP to see if this creates a water quality problem and what control measures, if any, are needed.* Intermediate/Long term.
 - Action: Zebra mussels are a serious threat to lakes in Kansas and have already been found in El Dorado lake. ***CGCL residents should avoid fishing or boating in El Dorado lake***. If they do so, boots, boats, minnow buckets, tools and anything that has touched the water of that lake should be washed in hot water, with a chlorine or salt solution, and away from boat ramps, and all bilge and live wells pumped out. Short and Long term.

Submitted by Task Force on Safety, Water Quality, Fishing and Recreation