

Opening comments....

Representative Deen and members of the committee.... My name is Rob Evans and I'm the Vice President for the Lake Carmi Camper's Association. On behalf of our association, our water quality partners and the LCCA members who are here today, I want to thank you for taking the time to hear from us reference our concerns for the future of Lake Carmi. Much has been said over the past few months about the water quality issues we have been dealing with at the Lake. However, nothing could have prepared us for what we experienced last summer. The state park beaches closed down, no swimming in the lake for months, crayfish literally crawling out of the lake due to the lack of oxygen and the thick waves of blue green algae that continued to roll up on our shores for months.

While blue green algae is not a new phenomenon at Lake Carmi, this summer was the worst we had ever seen. Many articles have been written, public hearings were held, network news stations filmed from our shores and property owners, town residents and all those who visit and recreate at Lake Carmi were left wondering what does the future hold for our lake. In an effort to bring attention this issue, we organized a legislative breakfast at the beginning of this legislative session to educate and inform our elected officials about the crisis that we face. We authored a document titled a Lake in Crisis which laid out some immediate action steps we felt needed to be taken in an effort to improve the water quality at Lake Carmi. Some of these same action steps are found in the proposed House Bill 730.

We invited members of our community, the Franklin Select Board, the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Agency of Agriculture to partner with us at this breakfast to clearly demonstrate our desire to work together to achieve our water quality goals. We were very pleased with the attention we got during our breakfast and are encouraged with the momentum we seem to be gaining in our clean water fight. I use the word fight because I do feel it is a fight for the survival of our lake. A fight that we cannot loose.... A fight, that if we work together, we can win.

Today, you will hear testimony from LCCA members, town officials and property owners, each with their individual story's, background and opinions about how to clean up our lake. You should be encouraged that so many different stakeholders, each with their selected interests have been able to come together to do this important work. I'd now like to introduce Mr. Pete Benevento who will provide the next testimony.

Representative Deen and members of the Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife Committee. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak today and for your willingness to listen to our concerns about the future of Lake Carmi. My name is Rob Evans and I'm the Vice President of the Lake Carmi Campers Association, a member of the TMDL Implementation Team and a member of the Franklin Watershed Committee. My family has owned a camp on Lake Carmi for 12 years. My children have fished and swam in the lake. We have hosted church gatherings, neighborhood meals, community events and shared some wonderful memories at Lake Carmi. I have enjoyed many friendships and have been blessed with many memories that the lake has provided to me and my family.

Much like the conversations that Governor Scott has been having about keeping our youth and seniors in the state, many of us who have looked forward to retiring on the lake are having second thoughts and are wondering if Lake Carmi is a safe place to bring our future grandchildren. This morning you have heard testimony about the impacts of phosphorous loading, algae blooms, loss of income, the devaluing of property on the lake not to mention the impacts to Vermont losing her reputation as being a good steward of her forests, mountains, streams and lakes.

While I am disappointed that to date, we have not seen significant enhancements in our water quality, I am cautiously optimistic that working together, we can affect positive change. I need you to know and understand that we see a value in working together to save our lake. We are not anti farming. However, we strongly support agricultural practices that will no longer allow the continued phosphorous loading on our lake.

These are the facts and there is no disputing them:

Agriculture is the overwhelming contributor to phosphorous loading on our lake.

While we recognize that lakeshores need to be improved, roads surrounding the lake need to be enhanced, continual improvements on camp septic systems need to be completed and creative land management practices need to be explored that slow down and filter out the phosphorous coming into our lake...

The problem and the solution – always comes back to agriculture.

I, like many of my colleagues have worked tirelessly to improve the water quality at our lake. We have attended meetings, lobbied our elected officials, locally organized, educated and informed our community about how to get involved, conducted countless shoreline projects, sponsored legislative breakfasts, collaborated with our local farmers and select board members and will continue to work towards our collective water quality goals. However, we can't do this without your help. We need more tools in our tool box to fight this problem.

We need more legislative oversight, we need more accountability and public transparency, we need access to nutrient management plans that for far too long have been kept out of the public's eye, we need more boots on the ground in the way of farm inspectors and water quality experts, we need more assistance for farmers to access data driven approaches to environmentally friendly agricultural practices and we need in-lake management plans that will keep our lake from dying before we can fix it.. Make no mistake about it.... Our lake is dying. I believe we need to speak openly and honestly about the severity of the problem we face and if any of you could have witnessed what we all saw last year..... you would agree.... We are in danger of losing this fight for clean water at Lake Carmi.

I would like to personally thank Perry Thomas, Commissioner Boedecker, John Roberts, Marle Rupe and Secretaries Moore and Tebbits (and other state employees that I know I am forgetting) for their willingness to partner with us in our work. While we may not always agree I have very much appreciated their willingness to answer our e-mails, come to our meetings and subject themselves to some of the heated debates that have taken place over the past few months.

So in my opinion it comes to this...

- We trust our elected officials to not do the easy thing but to do the “right” thing.
- We trust our government to think broadly about our future.... A future that includes clean water and an agricultural industry that is sensitive to the impacts it is having on our environment.
- We have faith that our government will not allow its citizens to be exposed to the harmful affects of blue green algae that has taken over our lakes and streams.
- We trust our elected officials to think of our future generations who will no longer be able to fish and swim in our lake if we don't get aggressive with our actions.
- We challenge each and every one of you to develop new legislation that significantly changes the way we do business.
- We need one single state agency who has the authority and responsibility to clean up our lake.
- We need to stop the spreading of manure in our watershed.
- We need more public transparency in all agricultural practices in our watershed.
- We need to increase our environmental setbacks.
- We need a total in lake management plan that will provide immediate relief to our lake – we are aware and have reviewed the final report for the evaluation of in lake management options for lake Carmi that was prepared for the Department of Environmental

Conservation. We fully support this report and we were pleased to see the encouraging data about the potential successes that could be achieved with the implementation of one of the specific aeration options. We look forward to partnering with all stakeholders during the decision-making process to bring about its implementation. Each and every day, legislative decisions have to be made as to where we spend our state's dollars. Only with the state's financial support, will we be able to showcase the successes in improving the health of our lake. However, we recognize that more work needs to be done in order for us to meet our TMDL goal of reducing the level of phosphorous in Lake Carmi over the next ten years.

- We also need to provide more technical and financial support to our farming community to enable them to reduce their impacts on our lake
- We know this.... What we have been doing is not working... if we can't do it at Lake Carmi.... We can't do it anywhere.

Thank you.