

Dear Senator:

We spent our afternoon listening to joint committee testimony at the Statehouse from UVM extension agronomist Heather Darby as well as the many farmers that make up the Lake Carmi watershed.

Dr. Darby began her presentation by telling legislators that she had testified several weeks earlier and felt that Carmi farmers weren't sharing all the good they were doing for water quality. Darby said that **assumptions** were being made about the watershed in Lake Carmi and therefore she and her colleague, Jeff Sanders needed to visit Carmi, meet with the farmers to find out for themselves what had been done and what needed to be done. Was this her first visit? She said it took Jeff 12 hours to collect the data she needed. Darby explained that the phosphorus index levels were 33% low risk (optimum), 53% medium risk and 13% high risk (greater than 20 ppm). Well, if the soil was sampled 3 weeks ago (and by state law, there has been no spreading since late fall) it would seem to us that the results would not be representative of the spring, summer and fall phosphorus levels. How can this pass for a reliable scientific study if it was not conducted close to the time when manure has been spread? 12 months of manure is being spread over a 6 month time frame that Darby avoided. According to Darby, soil test levels also indicated that there was minimum phosphorus build up and rather, phosphorus drawdown was occurring on these fields. If it is so quick and easy to test soil levels, we suggest they be tested monthly. And what is the level of phosphorus level in the **water**? Why is it that previous water sampling and studies all show excessive phosphorus concentration at the point where particular tributaries pass through agricultural lands and enter the lake? And even if the levels have decreased, studies show them to continue to be high.

We agree that farmers have improved their practices in the past 2 years in Carmi. However, the fact remains that our lake is in serious trouble. Our TMDL is 9 years old and to date, has not resulted in water quality improvement. And for Dr. Darby to make her first trip to Carmi 3 weeks ago and collect data refuting all previous sampling and studies is in our opinion arrogant and ludicrous.

We listened to the testimony of all the farmers that spoke at this meeting. We believe that much of what was shared was based on emotion rather than fact.

One comment in particular needs to be challenged. It was stated that there were 5000 people on Lake Carmi over July 4th (which would be 16 people at every camp). The State sampled the entire lake shoreline perimeter before and after the 4th of July and found no “hot” spots other than in tributaries passing through agricultural lands emptying into the lake.

We empathize with the small VT dairy farmers to the extent that they are being forced to make some very tough decisions regarding their land and their livelihood. However, our concern is with water quality. No one should be allowed to pollute Vermont waters. Our reality is that we are 65 years old, and our health, property value and way of life on Lake Carmi are being threatened. We spent 4 weeks last summer keeping all the front windows in our camp closed for fear of neurotoxins from cyanobacteria and their potential dangerous health implications. We no longer dare to eat the tasty walleye and perch we used to catch. Our grown children whom live out of state and used to enjoy vacationing with us no longer dare to spend their vacation with their children on Lake Carmi. (Our daughter and her husband purchased a property on Lake Sunapee, NH last September, 2017) Our boating and time spent on the lake have been significantly compromised. The property that we worked so hard to improve in anticipation of retirement has lost much of its value and for the first time in our lives, we wish we had sold it 10 years ago.

We thank you for your past support of clean water and ask that you continue to support our efforts for a clean lake Carmi. Darby ended her testimony by referring to farmers and saying that “Vermonters shouldn’t be afraid to get up in the morning and go do their job”. We say that “Vermonters shouldn’t be afraid to live their lives on the shores of Lake Carmi”. Please help us as we continue to fight for the lake that we so dearly love. Please put our interests and our lake above agricultural interests. We and generations to come will be forever grateful.

Sincerely,

Diane and David Larose

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