

Town of Windham

Environment & Sustainability
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MEMO

DATE: April 2, 2019

TO: Town Council
FROM: Highland Lake Leadership Team, Technical Advisory Committee
THROUGH: Don Gerrish, Interim Town Manager

RE: Highland Lake Watershed Management Plan Update – Septic System Review

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has been formed within the Highland Lake Leadership Team (HLLT) to start the process of drafting an updated Highland Lake Watershed Management Plan ('the Plan'). The Plan must be accepted and approved by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to be eligible to apply for future DEP funding to assist with water quality improvement efforts throughout the watershed. The process to incorporate all required elements and ultimately draft the Plan is time-intensive and requires participation from multiple entities (municipalities, lake association, conservation district, DEP, etc.).

As a part of compiling known data of potential pollutant and phosphorus inputs into the lake, Windham's Environmental and Sustainability Coordinator, Town of Falmouth, the TAC and State professionals are looking into the impact of septic systems to Highland Lake's water quality. Based on discussions with DEP, systems located within the shoreland zone (250 feet from Highland Lake) and also on sensitive soils areas, could inadvertently impact water quality even though they appear to be functioning properly. Metrics have been established based on these discussions to evaluate the systems. The metrics are as follows:

- System Age – If a system is older than 1975, then it will be given a 'Yes' rating. If the system is not older than 1975, then it will be a 'No' rating. If there is no information, then it will be given a 'Y' rating.

"Working in the Public Interest"

- Distance to Lake – If a system is less than 100 feet to the lake, then it will be given a ‘Yes’ rating. If the system is greater than 100 feet to the lake, then it will be given a ‘No’ rating. If there is no information, then it will be given a ‘Yes’ rating.
- Sensitive Soils – If a system is located on sensitive soils, then it will be given a ‘Yes’ rating. If a system is not located on sensitive soils, then it will be given a ‘No’ rating.

Each system will then have three metrics from which a priority/nonpriority ranking will be given.

The priority ranking guidelines are as follows:

- None Priority System - 0 of 3 metrics are ‘Yes’.
- Priority System - If 1 of 3 metrics or greater are ‘Yes’.

The priority systems are then ranked High, Moderate, & Low. These guidelines are as follows:

- High Priority – 3 of 3 metrics are ‘Yes’.
- Moderate Priority – 2 of 3 metrics are ‘Yes’.
- Low Priority – 1 of 3 metrics are ‘Yes’.

Based on these ranking guidelines, the Towns of Windham and Falmouth are currently prioritizing systems to determine the relative impact to the Lake’s water quality. The findings will be included in the draft Management Plan to be presented to Council and the public this summer. The Management Plan will include actions items to address possible impacts these systems have to water quality, including inspection and remediation.