

To the Conservation Commission:

Thank you for the work you are doing regarding Lake Shore Drive Parcel U12-14-0 and for requesting public input. Please consider my comments below.

I own one of the canoes in the photographs.

I walk along Lake Shore Drive daily, at all hours of the day and night. While I've observed a great deal of wildlife, I've never witnessed anyone using the shoreline inappropriately or destructively. The areas are well-maintained, presumably by a combination of the town and residents. I have participated in some neighborhood invasive plant removal and trash pickup events. Those events have always been well attended and have been a great benefit to the shoreline and community. One resident in particular has put in countless hours removing invasive species and restoring native plants. I mention this because I believe it is important to begin with the understanding that the community is engaged with and respectful of this public parcel.

There seem to be two issues: first, the perception that some people have used the parcel as if it were their own property, and second, concern about the environmental impact of such use.

I suggest that communication and education would go a long way in addressing both. When I moved here three years ago, I could see from the parcel map that this parcel and others were owned by the town. I could see a few docks discretely tucked away and some canoes and kayaks stored. Some docks had signs saying "Private". However, after searching online and calling the town office, I could find no information regarding public use of these parcels. After talking to a few neighbors, it appeared that there was an unwritten understanding that this low-impact, respectful use was serving the community well.

Therefore, my first suggestion is

1. Provide a short, one or two-page description, written in plain English, not legalese, explaining which activities are and are not permitted and why.

I did not hear any statements that environmental damage had occurred, merely concern for the future health of the lake. Therefore, the environmental concern can be addressed via this communication and education.

The private use questions seem to consist of docks, watercraft, vegetation and mowing, parking, and other physical objects.

I sincerely hope that the commission can find a way to:

2. Grandfather in the existing docks via a permitting process with the clear understanding that the docks are available to the public for public use, that they may not be enlarged or improved, and that no new docks or other structures will be allowed. Licensing or fees strike me as going too far, and sound too much like private use of public land.

These docks are small, discreetly located, and except for item 15, which appears to be 30 or more years old, of low-impact non-permanent construction. A few are somewhat askew, but I would not consider any of them rickety. All are safe to walk on. Long Lake is a Great Pond, available to the public for boating, fishing, and swimming. These docks allow these activities on this portion of the lake with minimal impact on the environment. If removed, these same activities are more likely to disturb the shoreline.

Many of the fishermen who fish from shore are young people. Because of water lilies and weeds, there are only a couple of spots where one can fish from shore. I believe young people should be encouraged to participate in outdoor activities and retaining the docks would support that.

3. Watercraft: not much was said of the watercraft stored or moored. For those of us who are not abutters and who do not own a pickup truck, it is not easy to bring a canoe or kayak or other watercraft down to the lake. I hope that they are allowed to stay. Perhaps a town email could be provided where the owners could provide their name, address, contact information, and description of the watercraft.

Parking: I do not believe I have ever seen more than one vehicle at a time parked on Lake Shore Drive by a fisherman. I have occasionally seen a car parked at the bottom of Birch St. I've always assumed the log in item 6, identified as a parking area, was placed there by either the town or a resident to discourage parking, not to allow it. I do not know the history of the parking area in item 10. It was obviously deliberately constructed. There seem to be two options: remove it or retain it. I suggest:

4. Retain the parking area in item 10 and place a small sign designating it "Fisherman Parking", to be used by fishermen or anyone arriving by vehicle with a small watercraft.

I am not suggesting that watercraft need to be unloaded and launched from that location, simply that it is a place to park after unloading, while using the lake.

Vegetation and mowing:

5. The removal of invasives must be at the top of the list of priorities in maintaining this parcel, particularly the Japanese Knotweed and Purple Loosestrife. This is the first year I have seen purple loosestrife becoming established. This plant spreads rapidly and aggressively. In other areas, I have seen this invasive turn areas of open water into swamp.

6. "Lawn-like" areas and mowing: I would like to see the lawn-like areas be more meadow-like and more wildlife-friendly, but no one wants to see invasives and brush take over the area. The views from this portion of the lake are very important. This is another issue that can be addressed by communication and education.

7. Other objects – not very important. I sometimes sit in the plastic Adirondack chairs in item 14 to enjoy the view. If I find them blown over by the wind, I stand them up.

Designated areas, new public docks, etc:

8. I, personally, would discourage designating individual areas for individual activities. I would not want to see a dock installed in the open area at the bottom of Aspen and Beach Streets or a specific area designated for the storage of watercraft. The dock and swimming area at the Town Beach are a wonderful asset for the town, but the Town Beach is a man-made recreation area. The rest of the public shoreline should remain conservation land for wildlife, fishing, swimming, boating, and the simple appreciation of nature, without the addition of any new man-made structures.

9. I would be in favor of a small, discreet dock hidden away somewhere in the area between Beach Drive and Lake Drive, for fishing and launching small watercraft.

Sincerely,

Blaine French

7 Emerson Dr.