

Clark Lake Dam research June 2015

Source: CLAA file cabinet Jacksonport Town hall; includes loose files, copies news articles, minutes CLAA, and some undated info. Further information added by Paul S. is noted. A copy of Paul's 2008 report was used in the most recent edit and worth a read.

I have put together the following time line which is not exhaustive but is representative.

Note that originally the lake level was drawn down to even lower levels in winter to prevent ice damage. Later the winter draw down was modulated and the timing adjusted because of the effect on the fishery and other aquatic vegetation. It sounds like the dam is underpowered but also that past-alleged unmonitored manipulation of lake levels by local residents lead to the threat of boards being locked down and then Sevastopol taking over sole control. There have been several meetings between the CLAA and town and continued complaints without a current resolution. Clearly, in addition to monitoring the levels, there needs to be an agreement for timely response to lake level changes and anticipated changes with confirmation of compliance and appropriate follow up. Our CLAA members also need education about the guidelines and that summer lake levels should not be elevated above the prescribed maximum.

1937: Dam built by WPA; significantly funded by Clark Lake residents, with ownership assigned to the Town of Sevastopol. 1991 DNR finding of fact #2: "The dam is owned, operated and maintained by the Town of Sevastopol." NB Paul: Current ownership unknown (County vs town). N.B Paul S.: Dam engineered for water shed of 12.8 square miles but see 2007 for current larger estimate. 1937 maximum level in summer 97.8 ft. with a late fall winter draw down to 96.25 feet and restitution to summer level by May 15.

1947: Predecessor to the current DNR established water levels of a max 97.80 and a winter draw down minimum of 95.01 feet to prevent flooding and ice damage. Maximum summer level restored by 15 May.

1967: Dam refurbished/ rebuilt.

1977: Recommendation to place locks on boards to prevent unauthorized adjustment. (I did not find what precipitated this decision, but assume there were unregulated water levels due to tampering.)

1978: Request to raise the maximum allowed summer level but failed to achieve the Clark Lake owners unanimous consent required from the DNR.

1979: Lake owners meeting with Rep. Swoboda about the dam to see if he could facilitate resolution of ongoing issues. He assured members he would make sure the DNR was responsive.

1981: Lake owners meeting with DNR to discuss the lake level management having an adverse effect on the fishery, esp. perch and an increase in the number of carp. Recommendation was to establish new guidelines with an increase in the winter level and to add a fish barrier. (The 2007 water study references Neustadter, L. "Clark Lake Water Level—Proposed Operation of the Dam memorandum". Dec 17, 1981 used as the basis of the new level, recommendations but I did not find this report in the file cabinet.)

I found one reference to a fine, possibly from Jan 1981 related to the water level being even below the 95.01.

1 1982: New DNR water level guidelines go into effect. References cited when the permanent guidelines were
2 instituted in 1991 report that there was less lake level fluctuation and the fishery improved while these
3 guidelines were in effect from 1982-1988. See 1991 for current order.

4 1984: Dam construction, including the fish barriers completed.

5 1987: Note from the outgoing dam maintenance person (a local lake resident) stating that the only thing he
6 would miss about the dam were all the nasty calls of complaint.

7 1988: Temporary order of 1981 expires. Board notes "dam draining well" (???)

8 1989: Boards removed in early November but acceptable winter level not reached until late January
9 suggesting that during this dry period the water level receded at a rate of about 1 inch per week

10 1990's: Reference to three warnings issued to Sevastopol but no specifics nor dates listed.

11 1991: Current permanent order for levels from DNR.

12 May 15-Dec 1 97.5-98.00

13 Dec 1-Dec 15 97.5-97.5; not to remove more than one board at a time

14 Dec 15-Mar 20 97.3-97.5

15 Mar 29-May 1 96.25-97.5 draw down to occur slowly with removal of only one board per time

16 May 1-May 15 Add boards to resume summer level of 97.5-98.00

17 The fish barrier shall be in place at all times

18 1992: Reference to shore ice damage but no specifics listed.

19 1995: Sevastopol fined \$175 for excessive winter draw down.

20 1996: Letter to Sevastopol for non-compliance with winter draw down again but this time due to lack of the
21 draw down. DNR says okay for CLAA to maintain the dam levels but the final decision rests with Sevastopol.

22 1997: Report that both town boards vote to allow local lake control of the dam levels. (I could not find
23 evidence that this ever did occur or when control again reverted to Sevastopol)

24 2000: May meeting among both towns, DNR and CLAA. N.B. Paul: Not sure this happened. I did not find any
25 notes from this meeting. Only later reference was at the CLAA annual meeting that members were pleased
26 with the current lake levels.

27 2001: May: Board complains that water levels not appropriately reduced at the end of 2000.

28 August: CLAA board member (Bob DeFaut) assigned to coordinate with Sevastopol.

29 Sep: Lock down for boards again discussed. No action.

2002: Feb: complaint sent to the DNR. Current level 97.8 with max listed as 97.50

May: Board reports “frustrated” with dam; another meeting among both (?) town chairs and CLAA to review past violations, complaints and develop an action plan.

July: Report that at the meeting all expressed a willingness to work together. CLAA rep to call Linda Wait at the Sevastopol town office if any problems.

August: Water level monitoring form created for documentation. (No completed forms are in the file cabinet or binders)

Member survey (date uncertain) requests to improve dam operations to minimize the ice damage.

2003: Ice damage noted during the 2002-2003 winter

May: Report that boards were removed late. Current level 9.21 9 (???); fish screens were added.

June: Annual meeting with members voting to have CLAA assume dam maintenance.

Oct: CLAA rep attended Sevastopol Town meeting requesting we take over the dam; also had a petition signed by many residents to support this.

Dec: Sevastopol Dam/Park & Rec Committee frustrated by all the dam complaints. Proposes a fixed level dam.

2004: Jan: Sevastopol refers the dam issue to the Park/Rec Com.

May: Board minutes report. . “Dam is now clear and maintained relatively well this past year.” Notes current water levels high.

June: Level 98.6 (max allowable 98.00)

July: Annual meeting; both town chairs were present and thanked by the members for the 2003-2004 dam maintenance despite a wet year.

CLAA/Sevastopol/Jacksonport council proposed but CLAA opposes and Jacksonport rejects at their board meeting. CLAA proposes ad hoc member to each town board.

2006: Clark Lake water level observation form put on Web.

2007: Water study report.

Lake levels reported to have exceeded the summer maximum for the last 6 years. Annual lake level fluctuation only 1 foot instead of the historic 1.5 feet and the allowable 1.75 feet.

Discussion of dam design and limited capabilities. Watershed now estimated at 17.5 square miles surface and an additional 22 square miles subsurface in contrast to the 1937 estimate of 12.8 square miles.

Also discusses fluctuation of the fabricated system is opposite of the natural system and potential effect on the aqua-vegetation and the fishery.

2008: Paul S. report "Clark Lake water level management" reports higher than permitted lake levels over the winter of 2007-2008 with subsequent flooding and shoreline damage in April 2008. (This report contains a nice review of the history and function of the dam.)

2010: July: \$23000 Repairs made to dam. Costs shared by Sevastopol and Jacksonport.

Aug: Water levels high (7 inches above the fixed dam level last week and now 4 inches above).

Reluctant to ask Sevastopol to remove a board because of past problems with low water in August.

Despite these high levels the level is still within the permit range.

2011: Jun: Town of Sevastopol tabled a proposal to close the water inlet to the dam to boats. Land adjacent to dam flooded and board will work with owners on both sides of the dam to obtain a permit to put in shoreline protection to prevent lake overflow onto their properties.

Paul S. to investigate solutions to replace the need for screens or cleaning.

2014 (Added from Paul S. claim letter)

Oct 15: Lake level 98.83. No boards had been removed and call to Linda Wait at Sevastopol.

Oct 28: Lake level 98.83 still no boards removed

Oct 31: 3 boards have now been removed. (no level noted)

Nov 19: Lake freezes over with shoreline damage.

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