



Petition for Mooring Permits

Pleasant Lake

Located within the towns of

Deerfield and Northwood, New Hampshire

This petition is formally requesting the establishment of RSA 270:61-a Petitions to Require Permits: Hearings through the requirements and procedures for a hearing with the New Hampshire Department of Safety pursuant to RSA 270:61-a.

The board of the Pleasant Lake Preservation Association (PLPA) has been asked by many residents to clarify why the public mooring field adjacent to Fish and Game's boat launch continues to grow. Many questions revolve around safety, navigational, environmental and encroachment issues.

As a result the PLPA formed a Mooring Field committee of four (consisting of 3 lake front property owners and an off-lake user/contributor to the lake) to investigate and give form to the

issues relevant to the NH Department of Safety. The committee enjoined two additional advisors, from the NH Lakes Association and a resident of nearby Bow Lake.

The PLPA acknowledges the following stakeholders:

- Waterfront property owners on Pleasant Lake
- Property owners on Gulf Road and all feeder roads to Gulf Road
- NH Fish and Game Department
- Dam Bureau, Department of Environmental Services
- NH Department of Environmental Services (broadly)
- Town of Deerfield, Police Department
- Town of Northwood, Police Department
- NH Marine Patrol
- The public at large and right to access

Background:

“Pleasant Lake is a 479-acre (1.94 km²) lake located in Rockingham County in central New Hampshire in the town of Deerfield. The eastern shore of the lake forms the boundary between Deerfield and the town of Northwood. Water from Pleasant Lake flows north to Northwood Lake, then west via the Little Suncook River to the Suncook River, a tributary of the Merrimack River. It is one of the top 10 cleanest lakes in New Hampshire.”
(<http://www.nhfishfinder.com/pleasant-lake-24878-location.html>)

Pleasant Lake, through NH Fish and Game, has made available to the public a small access area in the northwest corner of the lake for the purpose of a boat launch. The access area represents some **172** feet of shoreline. Within these **172** feet, there is (1) a boat launch (13 feet wide) designed for water craft arriving on a trailer and (2) the Pleasant Lake Dam and outlet (30 feet wide). The distance between the launch and the Dam is **only 83 feet** feet. On the far side of the Dam is a small beach only 25 feet wide. [See Diagram 1]. Fish and Game operates a limited parking facility designed for **13** cars with trailers and **4** cars without trailers (for those bringing canoes or kayaks on top of their cars). Once this lot is full, no alternative parking is available. The parking lot must be vacated at the end of each day, as the purpose of the lot is for day use only.

The launch and dam area is the only area open to the general public, as all remaining waterfront is privately owned, with the exception of Veasey Park, a swimming beach open only to the residents of Deerfield.

Between the Fish and Game parking lot and the launch is Gulf Road, a Class V town road which is the sole entrance/exit for some **250+** private residences. The critical portion of Gulf Road, from SR 107 through the Launch/Dam area, is in Deerfield; the remaining mileage is in Northwood. Due to the narrowness of the road, particularly as it runs the northern shore of Pleasant Lake, the road cannot support parking on either side. It is often so posted and with a 25mph speed limit, although conditions require a lesser speed for the both narrow and congested conditions at the north end of the lake. There are sections where no two cars can pass without a courtesy pull-over so that one car can proceed.

Within the last few years, an unregulated and at-will mooring field has sprung up adjacent to the boat launch and directly in front of the Dam. What began as 4 to 5 moorings adjacent to the launch grew to 24 moorings¹ (mid-August 20015 count).

Adjacent to the launch and the dam are many swimmers who spend the day within this narrow band of beach. Although swimming adjacent to and between these two state operations is hazardous and posted accordingly, “no swimming” has not been enforced.

As a result, the unregulated, at-will mooring field at the northwestern corner of Pleasant Lake has brought about the following hazards to public safety:

1. Moorings do not have safe distances between boats within the field to accommodate changing weather conditions.
2. Moorings are placed far from shore as the field has grown outwardly into standard navigation zones, a particular hazard for night navigation.
3. Moorings restrict the waiting area for boats using the launch to leave at the end of a day.
4. Moored Boats are often very near shore, within a few feet of the actual Dam. With a drawdown from the Dam, boats, often inadequately anchored, could be potentially drawn into and collide with the Dam.
5. Moored watercraft, from pontoon boats to ski boats, have a track record of breaking loose from or dragging their inadequate moorings across the lake. Many times property owners on the lake seek to intercept drifting boats before they do harm to private docks, other watercraft, and shoreline vegetation. If a boat is rescued from crashing ashore, what is the responsibility of a waterfront property homeowner to accommodate a rescued boat until the Marine Patrol arrives? What recourse do waterfront property owners have when an owner does not claim a boat in a timely manner?

6. No regulation or oversight exists for the current mooring field. It grows at will, without parameters for safety or good practice in an already congested area of boat activity, in an area designated solely for boat launching by virtue of the type of available parking permitted by Fish and Game.
7. Because there is no parking for mooring field boat owners, along with people who come simply to swim in the launch/dam shoreline, the number of cars parked illegally along the side of Gulf Road, in private roads, driveways, lawns and fields, mooring field proposes a direct threat during key weekends to the safe flow of traffic on Gulf Road and the rights of private citizens to secure their own property.

Summary:

Given the existence of an unregulated, at-will mooring field at the Pleasant Lake Boat Launch area, in Deerfield, NH, said field represents the following hazard to public safety:

On the waters of the Lake:

- As an unregulated mooring field, it can expand without review, encroaching upon the functions and navigational standards for a boat launch and a state dam.
- As an unregulated mooring field, there are no safety standards applied for distances between moorings, limits of placement, or the adequacy of anchoring the moorings themselves.
- When moored boats from this field break loose or drag anchors, they threaten on-lake navigation and often force property owners to intercept to protect damage to their own property, or require property owners to accommodate such a boat until an owner responds, placing an unfair burden on the property owner to accommodate the negligence of others.
- Although not part of the intent of this petition, and solely noted as a contributing factor to public safety, swimmers have made a de facto swimmers beach for themselves (in spite of “No Swimming” being posted at the launch) creating a hazard to children and adults now swimming around a mooring field, a dam, and a boat launch.

On Gulf Road:

- Because Gulf Road is the only way in and out for more than 250+ residencies who live on or off this road, and that Gulf Road is unusually narrow at the northern edge of the lake, and that no legal parking exists outside of the Fish and Game Boat Launch parking lot, an unsafe condition exists for normal traffic along and with a need for emergency vehicles to respond under already less than ideal road conditions.
- Such unsafe conditions exist because of increased use of the launch/dam area for those with moored boats, a use outside of the area and road's intended use, as defined by the capacity and (1) nature of the Fish and Game Boat Launch parking facility and (2) the surrounding signage for this single-access Class V road for so many people.