Caspian Lake Dam Task Force Meeting Minutes May 21, 2026
1:00 p.m.

Attending (in person unless otherwise noted): Stew Arnold, Paul Brierre, JoAnn Hanowski, Chris Philips (via Zoom)

Stew called the meeting to order. A quorum is present.

Stew reviewed the Caspian Lake Dam Task Force Charter – Charter currently provides for 7 volunteer members.

Review and discussion of Task Force of current membership and advisors.

> Members: Stew Arnold, Paul Brierre, JoAnne Hanowski (non-lakeshore member), Chris Philips, and John Schweizer
>
> Advisors: Chris Steel, Naomi Ranz-Schleifer, Melanie Clark, Kristen Leahy, and Will Marlier

Members present agreed to have Stew serve as the Task Force chair and John and Paul will serve as co-secretaries.

*Motion to amend Charter – to provide for 5 members, motion seconded, unanimously approved by members present.

Stew reported on conversations with Hardwick Electric Department Commissioners and Hardwick Town Manager.

- Town Manager David Upson informed Stew that HED is prioritizing Jackson Dam and its other dams which are classified as high hazard over the Caspian Lake Dam with is significant hazard.

- Stew told Upson of his hope that all three interested parties (Greensboro Selectboard, Hardwick Selectboard and HED) would contribute to funding studies of Caspian Lake and the dam with the Greensboro Association offering matching funds. This will take getting these parties to add exploratory expenses to their 2027 budgets.

- Stew suggests HED could charge its ratepayers for deferred maintenance which relates to the dam's significant hazard classification.

- Stew suggests the GA might be able to work with HED in a private-public partnership.

Stew reviewed history of Caspian Lake Dam.

- Caspian Lake is about 800 acres and its surrounding watershed is about 3200 acres, totaling 4000 acres.
- HED purchased the dam in 1924.
- 1927 flood – probably a 1000-year storm/flood.
- 1929 – HED built base of current dam (see Clay Simpson article).
- 1979 inspection by the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Stew and John Schweizer approached the Vermont DEC in 2014 to discuss high water events from seasonal snow melt, rainstorms, etc., convinced DEC to allow HED to increase sluice gate opening from 2 inches to 7 inches. This was denied but would be considered for further study.
- 2019 flood – lake level rose to 1 inch below crest of dam, sluice gate was raised to maximum opening in response, then set at the suggested 7 inches.
- 2023 flood – lake level overtopped the dam, spillway and sluice gate hydraulically inadequate for volume of water entering the lake – sluice gate was raised to maximum opening again and then returned to 7 inches.
- 2024 flood – opened the sluice gate to 11 inches before the storm, and the gate has remained open 11 inches through the present.
- 2025 – extreme drought conditions in August – no rain events – lake level dropped to 13 inches below the spillway in October.
- Relatively rapid snowmelt and heavy rain events raised lake level to 17 inches above the spillway on 4/18/26 – a 30-inch rise from October 2025.
- As of 5/21/26, Stew estimates lake level is dropping a half inch to an inch per week (Memorial Day rain raised the lake back up slightly).
- Stew notes that current high levels are good if we have a dry summer, but high if we have a heavy rain event.

Paul reported that he's had phone calls with engineers at Dubois & King, SLR Consulting and Weston & Sampson about submitting proposals and cost estimates for hydrology studies of Caspian Lake and hydraulic studies of the dam.

- D&K was interested in submitting a proposal/cost estimate, but after checking with HED, they will not because they're already employed by

HED for other dam projects and working on this project would potentially create a conflict of interest.

- SLR Consulting is interested in submitting a proposal/cost estimate and will be following up with me to discuss doing so.

- Weston & Sampson is interested in submitting a proposal/cost estimate and will be following up with me to discuss doing so. Weston & Sampson recently conducted hydrology and hydraulic studies on Shadow Lake and its dam for the Shadow Lake Association.

Chris discussed hydrology and hydraulic studies from his perspective as an engineer with experience doing such studies and doing dam design and construction.

- A hydrology study can utilize a computer model that accounts for soil types and moisture, streams in watershed, slopes, and the volume of the lake and plot rise in lake level in response to a rain event.

- Chris offered to do a simplified version of the modeling described above using a rain event based on USGS data – will look at 6 hour and 24 hour rain events. Estimates he can get the model done in the next month.

- Chris suggested considering doing a small fix to the dam to improve the classification to something better than significant hazard – a small fix might be removing the culverts and concrete above the spillway to widen the spillway, which would increase outflow, reducing stress on the dam and potentially improve its hazard classification.

Stew review Open Meeting training – the Task Force is subject to Vermont's Open Meeting Law. Stew will forward a training video to the Task Force members. The Task Force will set up a Zoom account through the Town and use the Town system.

Meeting adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Paul Brierre