



THE FUND *for* LAKE GEORGE



NEWS RELEASE

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FUND and Waterkeeper Release Special Report on the Need for Stream Buffers in the Lake George Watershed

State law requires stream buffer regulations, but the Lake George Park Commission has delayed action for 20 years. Stream buffers are widely used across the U.S. to protect water quality and protect stream ecosystems.

More than half of the water in Lake George comes from streams. Stream health is vital to the overall water quality health of Lake George.

Lake George – The FUND for Lake George and Lake George Waterkeeper released today a new report *Clear Choice: The Need for Stream Buffers in the Lake George Watershed*. This report provides information on the importance of streams to the overall water quality of Lake George and the need for a stream buffer regulatory program throughout the Lake George watershed. State law requires that the Lake George Park Commission develop stream protection regulations, but the Park Commission has failed to act as for 20 years there has been a blank page in the LGPC’s rulebook reserved for these regulations.

More than half of the water in Lake George comes from streams. The water quality in these streams is vitally important to the overall ecological health of Lake George. *Clear Choice* provides information on the ecological function and complexities of streams, the function of stream buffers to protect water quality, and how stream buffers have been successfully instituted in other areas of the United States.

“For 20 years the LGPC has failed to act to protect streams around Lake George despite a state requirement that it do so. This report articulates the importance of streams to the overall ecological health of Lake George as well as shows how effectively stream buffers have worked

in many other parts of the U.S.” said Peter Bauer, Executive Director of the FUND for Lake George.

“Across the country forest buffers have been found to be the most cost efficient and effective means to protect water quality health. Stream buffers cleanse out nutrients and sediment from runoff and stormwater. Streams with full forested buffer strips have been found to be healthiest from a variety of standpoints. Further, stream buffers protect against flashflooding, stabilize stream banks to prevent erosion, and protect downstream properties,” said Chris Navitsky, the Lake George Waterkeeper.

In *Clear Choice*, the FUND for Lake George and the Lake George Waterkeeper call upon the LGPC to finalize and adopt stream corridor control regulations to establish a stream buffer program for all streams throughout the Lake George watershed. This is required by state law governing the LGPC and is long overdue. The stream buffer regulations should be based upon a comprehensive inventory of all streams -- perennial, intermittent and ephemeral -- in the watershed. Here are particular features of a stream buffer regulatory program we believe should be included:

- All streams in the watershed should be located and classified as to order and current condition.
- Stream buffer regulations should be developed for the different stream classifications and conditions.
- Stream buffers should be a minimum of 100 feet in width on each side of the stream as measured from the stream’s bank.
- The buffer should increase 2 feet for each percent of slope greater than 10 percent.
- Pre-existing, non-conforming structures within the regulated buffers should be grandfathered and a variance program should be developed and administered directly by the LGPC for expansions and new uses of these structures. Any variance application to existing grandfathered structures shall require engineered buffers installed as a condition.
- Areas where restoration opportunities exist to create forested stream buffers should be identified and incentives and procedures developed to enlist landowner compliance in creating forested stream buffers.
- The LGPC shall ensure that all local codes and permits issued by the Adirondack Park Agency conform to the LGPC stream buffer rules.
- The LGPC should develop a comprehensive public outreach and education effort to fully engage the residents, local officials, and all other stakeholders throughout the Lake George watershed.

Around Lake George there are streams that are wild and undisturbed, while many others are encroached by roads and houses, channeled through culverts, or have been completely filled in. The difference in the water quality between streams around the lake is substantial and scientific research has found that the water quality is very different between disturbed and undisturbed streams.

“For the past 20 years there has been a blank page in the LGPC’s rulebook reserved for ‘stream corridor control.’ We’ve lost much around Lake George as streams have been encroached,

channeled, placed in pipes, and more because of the inaction by the LGPC. We urge action by the LGPC in 2009 on this vital issue” said Peter Bauer.

“Streams are sacrificed at an alarming rate within the Lake George watershed through actions by local municipalities and state agencies. The impacts to Lake George’s water quality are apparent in our stream studies and recently documented algae growth. We cannot wait any longer for action or it may be too late” said Chris Navitsky.

In a November 2008 press release, the LGPC announced that its plans to release a set of draft regulations for stream corridors in early 2009.

The FUND for Lake George

The FUND for Lake George is a not-for-profit, privately funded organization dedicated to the protection of Lake George. Formed in 1980, the FUND takes a science-based approach to the protection of Lake George water quality and the overall health of the Lake George watershed. The FUND pursues this mission through support for long-term scientific research on the lake, launching new initiatives, advocacy for new protections, and partnerships with other organizations and local governments. The FUND is the sponsor of the Lake George Waterkeeper, among other programs on Lake George. The FUND for Lake George is managed by a Board of Trustees and maintains an office in Lake George. See www.fundforlakegeorge.org.

The Lake George Waterkeeper

The Lake George Waterkeeper was launched in 2002 with a mission to defend the natural trust public resources of Lake George and its basin, which provides for the common good of the community and the watershed. The Lake George Waterkeeper is a resource for concerned citizens in the Lake George Basin who are concerned about land use and water quality. The Waterkeeper responds to all public inquiries and acts as an ombudsman with respect to issues having an environmental impact on Lake George and its watershed. The Waterkeeper monitors and intervenes in development proposals around Lake George and provides professional analysis by a licensed engineer to local and state regulatory agencies. The Lake George Waterkeeper is a program of the FUND for Lake George. See www.lakegeorgewaterkeeper.org.

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