



DATE: November 6, 2023

MEMO TO: Paras Parekh, Chair
Planning Committee

FROM: John E. Nelson
Chief Operations Officer

DISCUSSION OF: For Information Only - Request for water control structure on District property at Sequoit Creek Forest Preserve.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION SUPPORTED: Conservation

FINANCIAL DATA: No financial impact at this time.

BACKGROUND: East and West Loon Lakes are managed by the Loon Lakes Management Association (LLMA). LLMA receives funding through a special service area, known as “Lake County Special Service Area Eight” (SSA8). The special service area taxes are used for management and protection of the lakes and the surrounding watershed. A memorandum of agreement between LLMA and the Lake County Health Department-Environmental Services (LCHD-ES) stipulates specific requirements for LLMA’s expenditure of the SSA8 taxes. For example, any management that uses SSA8 taxes must be approved through an Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) consultation, because of the known presence of State-listed endangered or threatened species.

Since the Loon Lakes have a natural outfall, the water level in the lakes is highly variable, especially based on precipitation or lack thereof. East Loon Lake drains out to Sequoit Creek in the vicinity of the District-owned Sequoit Creek Forest Preserve. During periods of significant rainfall, residents have raised concerns about restrictions impeding the flow out of the lakes. For example, during 2015-2019 District staff monitored and addressed several debris jams and beaver dams where East Loon Lake flows out into Sequoit Creek. More recently, in 2021 and 2023, during periods of significant drought, residents have raised concerns of low water levels. District staff has been monitoring the area where East Loon Lake naturally flows into Sequoit Creek during these periods of drought as well.

On October 5, 2023, LLMA sent the District a letter (attached) formally requesting permission for LLMA to install on District property, near the northwest corner of East Loon Lake, where the lake water exits into Sequoit Creek:

1. a temporary structure such, as a water-filled cofferdam or other solution to “provide a short-term solution to the dire water fluctuation level issues that are impacting the wildlife that inhabit the lakes, as well as allow time for the planning of a permanent, fixed water level management system” and;

2. a permanent, fixed water level management system that will provide a “permanent solution to responsibly address and manage water levels for current and future generations on the East and West Loon Lakes”.

The installation and use of a temporary structure or permanent structure would require a temporary license or easement and a permanent easement (respectively) from the District. From LLMA’s letter, it appears that an agreement with and/or permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will also be required.

At this time, staff does not have enough information to seek policy direction on whether to negotiate such a license or easement agreement. If the Committee directs it to do so, staff will obtain further information relevant to this request and report back to the Committee.

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Director of Natural Resources, Manager of Board Operations, and Corporate Counsel.