

# BEAVERDAM RESERVOIR SPRING UPDATE



## May 2016: What's Going on at Beaverdam?

### Quick Facts at a Glance:

- Beaverdam Reservoir is a source of public drinking water.
- Loudoun Water owns the reservoir and surrounding property. Loudoun Water wants to ensure safe reliable drinking water for all residents for years to come.
- As a beautiful community recreation spot, NOVA Parks will maximize the value of this amenity for the community to enjoy.
- The dam and spillway at Beaverdam need to be repaired and as a result, the reservoir will temporarily close to allow for the renovations. The public access schedule for the reservoir will be:
  - 2015 and 2016: Open
  - 2017 and 2018: Closed
  - 2019: Grand Permanent Opening
- Loudoun Water and NOVA Parks are engaging the public to help create the vision for the reservoir once renovations are complete.

**How are we getting there?** On October 27, 2015 Loudoun Water and NOVA Parks hosted a community open house at the National Recreation and Park Association to gather input on recreational uses and other ideas to shape the greater vision for the amenity. The UVA Institute for Environmental Negotiation was also on hand to assist.

Approximately 200 people participated. They represented a broad range of interests, including personal safety, environmental education, recreational use (fishing, rowing, kayaking/canoeing, hiking/trails, mountain biking, and equestrian), nature enthusiasts and local resident perspectives.

This newsletter provides an overview of the meeting and is the first opportunity for the community to review the range of input and ideas provided at the open house.



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## Community Meeting Review

Mark Peterson, with Loudoun Water, began his remarks with a welcome to everyone attending the open house. He provided the backdrop for the evening's conversation, referencing the reopening of Beaverdam Reservoir to the public on May 30, 2015. This occurred as a result of Loudoun Water and NOVA Parks forming a joint partnership along with the community to temporarily reopen this local asset.

Mr. Peterson noted that when Loudoun Water took ownership of the reservoir and surrounding properties, several variables led to its closing in 2014. However, with the time and effort required to plan the renovation of the dam, Loudoun Water established a management agreement with NOVA Parks and the reservoir was reopened to the public.

It was noted that the renovation of the dam is still in the design phase. When construction is active over the coming years, it is likely that Beaverdam will again close for a brief time until the project is complete. In the meantime, visitors are welcome to responsibly enjoy Beaverdam. The reservoir is a source of public drinking water, first and foremost.

Visitors must do their part to keep the water clean. As the owner of the reservoir and surrounding property, Loudoun Water wants to ensure safe reliable drinking water for all residents for years to come.

NOVA Parks will manage the reservoir as a recreational asset and maximize the value of this amenity for the community to enjoy. In preparing for renovations of the dam, water levels may periodically fluctuate. Loudoun Water has made a full commitment to allow public access to the reservoir once the construction is complete.

The public access schedule for the reservoir will be:

**2015 and 2016: Open**

**2017 and 2018: Closed**

**2019: Grand Permanent Opening**

After the introduction, participants were encouraged to visit several topic station to share their comments and ideas. These comments were collected at the meeting and will serve as a starting point for the vision.

### Community Response

The overview of the planning process was appreciated, as was the commitment to a community partnership. Residents encouraged the team to post information on the renovation timeline, how water levels might fluctuate and the related closing of the reservoir or other impacts. There is also interest in learning more about how recreational opportunities, education, and drinking water objectives can co-exist. All of this will be explored in the coming months by the project team.

## Topic Stations

Located throughout the meeting room, twelve “topic stations” were set up and staffed by members of Loudoun Water, NOVA Parks and the Institute for Environmental Negotiation. At each station, people could share their ideas and ask questions. All ideas were recorded on flip charts. Participants could also submit their suggestions on a worksheet, or by talking to a team member at the “listening station” tables. Comments are sorted by topic below.

### Environmental Stewardship and Education

Approximately half of the ideas generated around environmental stewardship and education focused on outdoor activities at the reservoir, especially for local schools to inspire student interest in the natural world. Specific suggestions included: field trips, dipping ponds, outdoor labs and activities, and tours of the dam with walking areas for special needs. To support this, partnerships could be established with local schools for environmental science classes. Other comments addressed increasing community awareness of the hydrologic cycle and watershed management through exhibitions, online resources and interactive worksheets.

### Fishing

A recurring suggestion related to fishing activities was the designation of dedicated docks, launches and location. These areas should have information posted about fish species (length limits and identification) and licenses. Buoys were also encouraged to separate traffic patterns for fishing and rowing

activities. Several types of activities were suggested, such as learn-to-fish events, sponsored fishing contests (for various age groups), and fishing clubs. Other comments conveyed interest in extending hours of access for fishing (perhaps through special permits) and for providing access to Goose Creek.

### Hiking

The majority of ideas for hiking focused on trails and amenities, including a reservoir-circuit trail. A general desire for more trails included specific suggestions for a trail along Goose Creek and Broad Run, and for an exercise trail. While some encouraged multi-use trails, others indicated that hiking and biking do not work well together. Generally, trails should be distinguishable. Currently there are places where the trail disappears. Clean, well-maintained trails should include markers and a description of difficulty and length. There are a range of perspectives regarding the trail including: wider and smoother trails, alignments that are closer to the water, an interest in maintaining a natural look, the use of porous materials, and circumventing or providing a surface over marshy areas. Other suggestions mentioned lit trails, perhaps using solar lights, and other amenities – such as signs, maps, water fountains, and labeling of native species. A request was made for a policy that dogs be allowed only on a leash.



### Nature Appreciation

Ideas for supporting nature appreciation covered amenities, habitat and activities. Suggested amenities included viewing platforms, benches along paths and trails, a pavilion with a fire pit, and dedicated areas for passive use. Themes around habitat and activities were related, with ideas for the following: planting trees in appropriate locations to encourage birds, conducting surveys for turtles and amphibians, guided field walks, and reintroduction of native species. Partnership could be established with master gardeners in restoration and native plant projects. Also, a balance approach was encouraged in terms of clearing out dead and fallen trees while still providing habitat and niche conditions.

## Paddling

Loudoun Water and NOVA Parks were encouraged to support these types of activities that do not destroy the natural look, such as providing low-impact launch access to the water. Other ideas about facilities included a public use dock designated for



paddlers, locking storage stations and looking into the possibility of rentals – although space is limited. Specific suggestions about access mentioned Mount Hope, Freedom Park and Goose Creek. Safety and skills are also a priority – with ideas for basic skills sessions and requirements for life jackets and personal flotation devices. Safety concerns also involve interfacing with other recreational users, with comments supporting the establishment of traffic patterns to reduce crashes, and locating paddling access points away from fishing and rowing activities. There is also interest in considering whether permits should be required, either for individuals or large groups, or the possibility of identifying some days when large group rowing and kayaking are not allowed.

## Picnicking

Pavilions and picnic tables were encouraged, tempered by interests in not detracting from the current natural look of the area around the reservoir. Restrooms should be located nearby, with designated trash and recycling bins to reduce litter. In addition to smaller picnic areas, some also envisioned larger open areas and covered areas – with a view of the reservoir – for local community gatherings. Other ideas for amenities included benches, nearby paths/boardwalks, and places to barbeque or grill. One suggestion is to look at Great Falls Park as a model. Good neighbor rules were encouraged for sound levels and cleaning up after use.

## Rowing (Crew)

Many ideas focused on rowing access and facilities, including a boathouse – preferable on the waterfront and with restrooms. An improved public dock was also mentioned, as were more rowing-designated private docks. During the time when the reservoir will be closed, there were suggestions to provide more access on the Potomac. Other suggestions addressed infrastructure in the water: a marked racecourse, buoys to mark the course when water levels are low, and designated areas for fishing, rowing and kayaking

– to keep traffic moving. There is interest in hosting regattas or inter-scholastic competitions, perhaps with a grandstand for viewing, as well offering rowing clinics during school break and the summer. A good neighbor policy was suggested: with noise restrictions prior to 8 a.m., and crew right-of-way rules for regattas and practices. A balance should be found in supporting rowing sports with other reservoir users, to minimize impacts between users.

## Other

In addition to hiking, suggestions were made to provide trails for equestrian use, mountain bikes and ATVs. Ideas related to other recreational uses included a camping area, bird watching and bird watching hides, and open space for large events such as open-air music and fireworks. Discussions about general facilities and amenities addressed: easier access to the water, more parking areas, restrooms, recycling containers and doggie bag dispensers. Signs to reservoir facilities are essential and part of being a good neighbor. Directional signs are needed of Belmont Ridge Road and a recommendation was made to place a “No Access to Reservoir” sign at the front of Reservoir Ridge Place. Other comments offered a range of ideas: providing equipment rentals; creating a Cub Scout storage shed; partnering with community organizations for cleanup and maintenance activities; a night security patrol; linking the reservoir area with other nearby facilities; and looking at best practices to avoid attracting geese.

## What’s in a Name?

Community members were asked to share their thoughts about the name of the reservoir. Some liked the name and discouraged any changes. Others liked the name and were open to other possible names for the reservoir. Some suggested renaming the reservoir to relate it more to the community activities that are supported there, while others mentioned having a contest to rename the reservoir.

## What’s Next?

Loudoun Water is working with NOVA Parks to review community feedback and work on a draft land use plan for the reservoir. The team will be inviting the community to review and comment on draft plans once they are complete.

In the meantime, for information on [Park Rules and Regulations](#), call NOVA Parks at 703-352-5900 or visit [www.novaparks.com](http://www.novaparks.com).

For information on the [dam and spillway construction or drinking water](#), call Loudoun Water at 571-291-7893 or visit [www.loudounwater.org](http://www.loudounwater.org).

## Topic Stations: Full Comments from the Worksheets

### Environmental Stewardship and Education

- Nature education for schools – again with minimal impact, but field trips inspire students' interests in natural world
- Pond dipping area for schools
- Outdoor labs for local schools and organizations
- Partnerships with schools and environmental science classes
- Environmental science labs, outdoor activities, discuss hydrologic cycle and water conservation
- Water education center with emphasis on science tours of dam, with walking areas for special needs
- Create community awareness
- Understanding the processes in place by organizations to preserve the environment through exhibitions, online resources and interactive worksheet

### Fishing

- Post species length limits and identifiers at access points, fishing pier or other raised walkway
- Designated docks/launches/locations with fishing info (license)
- More designated fishing areas
- Make Goose Creek available
- Include gar and walleye species in re-stock
- Take survey of what is there
- Keep fishing, but prevent fishing litter and motors on lake
- Allow electric motors
- Fishing open houses, learn to fish, fishing club
- Sponsor fishing contests for various age groups
- Extended access for fishermen (before sunrise, after sunset) – special permits needed?
- Buoys separating traffic patterns for rowing and fishing

### Hiking

- A reservoir circuit trail would be nice
- A trail along Goose Creek and Broad Run
- More trails in general; along the water, similar to Great Falls Park
- Multi-use trails for hiking equestrians and mountain bikes
- Biking and hiking do not work well together
- Widen the paths and allow ATVs – or make a path for it
- Design an exercise trail
- Dogs on leash only
- Clean trails with labeled native species
- Well-maintained trails, include description of difficulty and length
- Clearly marked paths and trails, signs, maps
- More distinct trails
- Last summer, hiking from parking lot to dam, encountered several wet areas; also, walking toward golf course the trail disappeared
- Wider trails / smoother trails (to increase safety)
- No concrete! Keep natural look, use pervious materials
- Proper lighting, lit trails (solar lights)

### Nature Appreciation

- Viewing platforms
- Dedicated areas for passive use
- Plant bald cypress trees along shore to encourage birds
- Conduct survey for turtles and amphibians
- Guided field walks by professional biologists and/or interpreters
- Signs for native plants ; team with master gardeners in native plant projects and restoration; reintroduce native species of animals, flora and insects
- Have habitat/niche encouragers – such as suitable log piles for decomposition
- Benches and a pathway around the reservoir
- Clear out dead and fallen trees

## Paddling

- Basic skills sessions on proper use and safety
- Life jackets and Personal Flotation Devices should be REQUIRED!!
- Rentals – but space is limited
- Limit to people with permits
- Provide locking storage stations
- Establish traffic patterns to prevent crashes
- Support activities in a way that does not destroy natural look
- Low-impact way to get boats in the water
- A designated public use doc for paddlers at Mount Hope; currently people have to wet dock
- Safe access areas away from fishing and rowing activities
- Should need permit for large group rowing and kayaking, some days not allowed
- For kayakers, provide launch access at Freedom Park (Route 7, Goose Creek); at White's Ford, currently, steep gravel makes it difficult to exit from the river; Beaverdam has easy access

## Picnicking

- Pavilions need to be built; yes to picnic tables
- Not too close to the water (litter) AND NO LOUD RADIOS
- Reservoir is very simple and pristine in current state – do not add too many unnatural structures
- A couple of shelters available for rental; smaller sites open to users around the reservoir with good wash facilities
- Open areas with established picnic areas
- Mimic Great Falls Park
- Need place to barbeque/grill and nearby public restrooms
- Have designated recycling and trash bins to reduce litter
- Recreational park or large open area, with views of reservoir
- Sheltered areas for local community gatherings

## Rowing (Crew)

- Boathouse/oar house and, in an ideal world, grandstand
- Some days, not to the exclusion of other uses
- Minimize impact of rowing sports on other reservoir users
- Buoys to mark course when water levels are low
- For the 1-2 year period when the Reservoir is closed, please consider opening up more access for crews on the Potomac
- Another boathouse / rowing facility along the Potomac.
- Good access to launch areas
- Marked racecourse
- Infrastructure in the water (such as buoys) would keep designate areas for fishing, rowing and kayaking – and keep water traffic moving. (2)
- No more loudspeakers at 6 a.m.! Neighbors can hear it. Noise control until 8 a.m.
- Facility on waterfront with restrooms
- Improved/public dock and more designated private docks
- Authorization to host regattas or inter-scholastic competitions; crew right-of-way rules for practices and regattas

## Other

- Biking trails or other improved multi-use trail systems
- Equestrian access to trails
- Equestrian parking
- Bird watching, bird watching hides
- Camping area
- Some sort of open space for big events like open-air music, fireworks, etc.
- Equipment rentals (e.g., life vests, paddleboards, etc.)
- Do not duplicate sports field provided at Hanson Regional Park
- Restrooms
- Recycling receptacles
- Doggie bags with signs asking owners to pick up after pets
- Better access and signs to facilities
- PROPER SIGNS needed off Belmont Ridge Road, where Mount Hope church is. Everyone goes down Reservoir Ridge Place looking for access. Put "No Access to Reservoir" sign in front of Reservoir Ridge Community.
- Loudoun should provide "No Trespassing" signs for residences located along the reservoir
- Provide night security patrol
- Easier access – more paths, clearer open walking areas
- More parking lots, more recreational access
- Easier access to the water
- Partner with community organizations on clean-up, maintenance
- Cub Scout storage shed