



The Monitor

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEWFOUND LAKE REGION ASSOCIATION

Lake Level Management a Balancing Act

The current policy, as explained by Steve Doyon of the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Dam Bureau at a March 29 workshop hosted by the NLRA, is a best attempt to balance competing interests of the many users of Newfound Lake and the Newfound River. These interests include beach owners, boaters, the native fishery, aquatic plants, water quality, homeowners, hydroelectric power generation and anticipation of extreme weather events (flooding and drought). The current policy was established in the early 1980s, following a period of revisions that began in 1974 when NHDES took ownership of the West Shore Rd. dam that controls lake levels, and obtained the water rights from Public Service of NH. Possible revisions to the current policy were the focus of the presentation.

The graph shows how lake levels are being managed over ever-smaller ranges since the NHDES began operating the control dam. Note the current (1982) approach, has a smaller range than the 1974 and 1977 management plans.

The nearly fifty people who attended the March 29th meeting also heard from

Amy Smagula (NHDES Biologist), Bob Craycraft (UNH Hydrologist) and Don Miller (NH Fish and Game), who spoke about the impact of lake levels on aquatic plants, water quality and the native fishery, respectively. All of the speakers are not only experts in their fields, but have long and deep connections with Newfound and other New Hampshire lakes – these are top-notch professionals who take their responsibilities seriously and do great public service!

To better understand how various interests compete, consider the following goals of each of group of users:

- Beach owners – Prefer lower levels over the summer to expose swimming beaches.

- Boaters – Prefer higher and steady water levels for navigation and access (launching).

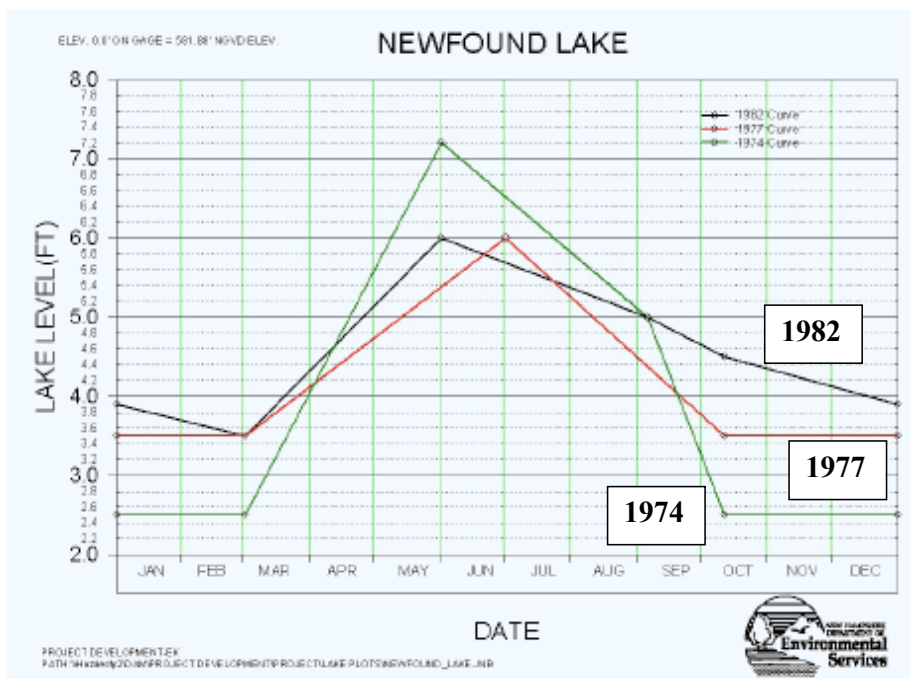
- Fishery – Native species that spawn in late fall over the winter require high and steady water levels for protection from freezing and loss of habitat.

- Aquatic Plants – Extremes in lake levels foster growth of opportunistic (“invasive”) species.

- Water quality – Extreme draw downs accelerate delta formation and delivery of nutrients from tributaries into the lake.

- Homeowners - Prefer low water (at some time of the year) to access shoreline structures for repair.

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- Power generation – prefers steady and moderate flows in the Newfound River to optimize output.

- Everyone – wants to NOT be flooded by heavy rains (that raise the lake level at the rate of roughly 14 inches for every inch of rainfall, faster than the dam can let it out).

As a result of the positive response to this topic and the importance and complexity of the issue, the NLRA plans to sponsor a similar presentation on Thursday evening July 26. Please talk to your friends and neighbors, watch the local media and monitor our web site (www.newfoundlake.org) for upcoming event information.