

Paramount to Our Future...

Over the years this newspaper has carried photographs of hundreds of proclamation signings, symbolic ceremonies designed to either extend congratulations or to raise awareness of everything from heart disease to Flag Day to any number of special events. The general, overall effectiveness of proclamation signings is likely minimal; however, we single out one signing this week because of the immense importance that lies behind it.

July has been proclaimed National Lakes Appreciation Month by a national organization and the governor of Maryland, and this week the Garrett County commissioners issued a local version. (See photo in this section.) While the proclamation is designed to cover all lakes - and Garrett County has about a dozen lakes - the focus of this corner today is on the mother of them all, Deep Creek Lake.

The importance of DCL to Garrett County cannot be overstated, even though it has been touted on numerous occasions and by many different entities. One figure that is reported on a fairly regular basis is the percentage of Garrett County's budget that is funded by property taxes

of lake and lake watershed owners. That number is a staggering 60%, which alone is sufficient to emphasize the importance of Deep Creek Lake.

However, when one takes into account the many other economic benefits of the lake, and the proverbial domino effect, it takes on an even greater significance. One can only try to imagine Garrett County without DCL, and how much worse off our general economy would be in that scenario. Because, besides the many millions of dollars in tax revenue that would be lost, millions more would be lost in revenue generated by the restaurants, motels, marinas, recreational facilities, and gas stations that are only in existence because of the presence of DCL. The hundreds of jobs, both seasonal and fulltime, for local young people and the not so young, would not exist were it not for the lake. The accommodations tax revenue into the county coffers would be maybe 10% of what it is today. Tourism into our county would be slashed to shreds, meaning every other business that is *not* located around the lake would suffer. We likely lose our "destination point" designation. This very newspaper in which these words appear would likely be unable to survive financially were it not for DCL.

So the preservation of Deep Creek Lake is

paramount for the future of Garrett County, plain and simple, whether one lives in Shallmar, Oakland, Finzel, or Crellin. Therefore, the various issues involving the lake must be taken seriously and addressed over the next several years to keep the lake the gem that it is today. These would include problems of water levels, shoreline erosion, flow of silt into the lake, invasive plant life, lake access issues, possible overuse of the lake surface, and others. The lake is not crippled by any of these problems today, but all of these conditions need to be addressed relatively soon in a comprehensive, coordinated, team effort by the state of Maryland (owner of the lake), county government, lake property owners, lake business owners, and, well, all of us who live in this county. The lake is just way too important to our future.

Don Sincell, Editor

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