

Moody Mountain Environmental

Memo

To: Paul Gibbons
From: Paul Leeper, Moody Mtn Env
CC: Matt Stern
Date: October 7, 2016
Re: Proposed temporary float Saint George Map 221 Lot 22 Molloy parcel

Dear Paul,

This memo will serve as a report on my findings regarding the proposed Molloy temporary float in Saint George.

I have visited the area and researched the habitat using Federal, State, and Town resources. My primary concerns with the project are as follows:

- the disturbance and fragmentation of the significant bird habitat and;
- the potential for siltation and sedimentation disrupting the shellfish and invertebrate habitat in the cove.

The proposed project is located at the southern head of Watts Cove which is part of an extensive mudflat. The flat drains almost completely in this area and is approximately 5 feet deep at the deepest during normal high tides. The surrounding shoreline to the north (across the cove from the project site) is protected by an easement (Georges River Land Trust); three single family homes (including the applicant) are present on the southern and western shores. The east shore is primarily undeveloped with the exception of one house (See Photos)

Significance of the Habitat-

1. As found in the Saint George Comprehensive Plan Section 6 Marine Resources under Natural Resources (pg.10) *Evaluation of national Wetland Inventory maps and U.S. Fish and Wildlife maps entitled "An Ecological Characterization of Coastal Maine," reveals several sensitive resource areas in St. George. Watts and Cutler Cove have intertidal flats that are listed as critical habitat for migrating shorebirds. In 2004, the State's "Beginning with*

Habitat Program” identified conservation focus areas of statewide significance which includes the Lower St. George River. The concentration of coastal wildlife, as a result of extensive mudflats, protected coves, and varying salinity gradients, includes suitable habitats for tidal waterfowl and wading birds, shorebirds, shellfish, and diverse diadromous fish species

2. Under Section 5 Natural Resources, Birds, the Comprehensive Plan reports that Watt’s Cove is a class B Coastal Wildlife Concentration area which is regionally important to waterfowl and other birds.

3. The Maine Inland Fisheries & Wildlife biologists have mapped this area as high or moderate Tidal Waterfowl/Wading Bird Habitat. High or moderate value tidal habitat is as defined in IF&W’s rating procedure or is a tidal habitat that has documented outstanding use by waterfowl or wading birds or use by a rare species of waterfowl or wading birds. Waterfowl are ducks and geese, wading birds are herons, glossy ibis, bitterns, rails, coots and the like.

4. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection lists mudflats and other coastal wetlands as Wetlands of Special Significance.

5. Finally the Saint George Conservation Commission recently listed Watt’s Cove as a Significant Ecological Area. Among the reasons are:

- *Watts and Cutler coves have extensive areas of high value estuarine intertidal mudflat wildlife habitats.*
- *The coves have extensive areas of high value ...tidal waterfowl wading bird habitats.*
- *Conserved lands in this area include three Georges River Land Trust permanently conservation easement protected lands and several tax -code protected lands.*
- *The Lower St. George River is designated to be of statewide ecological significance for its concentration of coastal wildlife (Beginning With Habitat, Focus areas of statewide ecological significance, Lower St. George River)*

Potential Adverse Impacts to spawning grounds, fish aquatic life, bird or other wildlife habitat (Shoreland Zoning Ordinance Section 16D (4))

The proposed plan calls for an aluminum ramp and float to be placed in the significant waterfowl and wading bird habitat. The float will be grounded for a major portion of the tide cycle due to its location at the head of the cove. This will cause resuspension of sediments as the structure is grounded and then refloated. This siltation may impact invertebrates and juvenile shellfish on the mud that serve as feed sources for the waterfowl and wading birds.

The major concern regarding this project is the potential adverse impacts caused by the intrusion of the float onto the flat and the associated human activity (launching boats, recreating on the dock). This can cause birds to avoid the area around the float. In addition, because the cove is only about 250 ft across at the project site the float and associated activity may cause birds to avoid the rest of the cove as well. This will fragment the wildlife habitat and ultimately reduce its size and significance. Herons especially will avoid the area if human activity is present. Likewise, many waterfowl such as ducks may avoid the area preventing nesting and feeding in the upper cove.

If you have any questions please contact me.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul C. Zeepe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.