

Marine Division patrols will cost \$32 an hour

by Brooke Meier

March 31, 2010

Local officials and residents from communities surrounding Cass Lake are still discussing alternatives to traditional lake patrols this season, following a forum organized by Oakland County Commissioners Shelley Goodman Taub (R-Orchard Lake, West Bloomfield) and John A. Scott (R-Waterford, West Bloomfield).

The communities of Keego Harbor, Waterford, West Bloomfield and Orchard Lake Village surround Cass Lake.

The forum, held on Wednesday, March 24, in the Orchard Lake City Hall, included Taub, Scott, a representative of the Oakland County Sheriff's Department, and local police officials. Riparian property owners who use Cass Lake for boating and other water activities were invited to attend.

"We wanted to get the information out there that Oakland County can no longer afford to do the patrols, and inform residents and municipalities of the options available to them for Cass Lake," Taub said.

According to Taub, Oakland County has 450 lakes and approximately 90,000 registered boats — more than any other county in the state. In previous years, the county has spent \$1.2 million to \$1.4 million on sheriff's department Marine Division patrols on various county lakes. Due to budget cuts, the county has eliminated regular Marine Division patrols on county lakes.

"We just don't have that money anymore, and we can only support a dive/rescue team," Taub said. "I suggested that each of the police department representatives for the four communities take back the information from the forum to their communities and decide whether they want to contract with the county for marine patrols, or pursue a different option."

The Marine Division is offering to patrol lakes in Oakland County for approximately \$32 an hour. That price would include one deputy and a boat. For Cass Lake, if the Marine Division were to patrol the same number of hours it has during past summers, the total cost for 2010 patrols would be \$36,000.

West Bloomfield Township officials had discussed using their own police personnel for marine patrols this year; however, Deputy Chief Joe Chapin said following further discussion within the department, that plan has been put on hold.

"We are trying to explore all the options available and decide what works best for our residents," he said. "We have other lakes in the community to think about, as well. West Bloomfield only contains a small portion of Cass Lake, and, in the past, we really haven't had any problems."