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Construction crews work on the White Lake launch project.

White Lake boat launch construction is far from smooth sailing

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Boaters are frustrated by continued delays in opening the White Lake boat launch on Duck Lake Road at the south end of the waterway.

The nearly \$500,000 Michigan Department of Natural Resources project includes a total reconstruction of the launch site, adding parking, improving traffic flow, widening the launch and adding bioswales to keep runoff from the pavement from going into the lake.

The project was originally scheduled to reopen by September 5 and after a few missed proposed opening dates it is now scheduled to reopen by mid-October.

Series of unfortunate events

"At this point, people on the lake are getting nervous about getting the boats out of the lake before temperatures go down." -
- Bob Parrett

Last spring, the DNR said the construction project would run from May 1 to August 1.

"That was inconvenient for people, because most of the homeowners on the lake use the launch," explained Bob Parrett, White Lake Citizens League communications director.

WLCL put out the word boaters had to get their vessels in the water before the first of May.

"A week before DNR said they were going to postpone until June 1 to September 5," Parrett said.

Nearing September 5, the DNR announced things still weren't going as planned and the open date would probably be September 15 "and then September 30 and now October 15," Parrett added.

"At this point, people on the lake are getting nervous about getting the boats out of the lake before temperatures go down," said Parrett, adding that freezing temperatures could damage the boats if they remain in the water.

Bill Althoff, DNR park supervisor at Highland State Recreation area and administer of the boat access site said, "We're committed to getting it open by October 14.

Bad start

The initial delay was caused by a slow down in DNR administrative approval of the project. Then construction problems started popping up, Althoff said.

People living on the lake can accept the October 15 opening, "but much less than that and there will probably be some angry mobs."

The planks were precast, delivered and are added to the existing plans to change it from a one lane ramp to two lanes.

"The biggest delay is they installed them wrong and didn't supply a build survey," Althoff said. "Now we have to accept what they've done. Two planks were chipped and had exposed supporting steel."

There were concerns about the project even before it started, Parratt said, because part of the plan includes expanding the nearby parking lot from 19 to 27 spaces.

"It's always been the policy that the boat launch can only be used when there are places in the parking lot to restrict the number of boats on the lake," Parratt said.

The added spaces mean more boats on the lake.

Current situation

"There are about 800 boats and 600 residences on the lake," Parratt said, adding that many people have two or three boats.

The citizen's league believes the site is currently usable, however the planks that meet the road are sticking above ground.

"Our suggestion is put some gravel in there while there is no construction being done, but the DNR said they didn't want to do that," Parratt said.

Meanwhile, the Lester Farms Subdivision association allowed lake residents limited access to their boat launch on Jackson Blvd. about a mile west of Ormond Road during limited hours September 30 and October 1-2. A \$10 donation was requested.

If there are additional dates lake residents would have access to the Jackson Blvd. launch they will be listed on the WLCL website, wlcl.org. Parratt said that site will update information on the launch opening.

A representative from the general contractor, Antler Construction, didn't return calls for comment.

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