

PINERY PIPELINE



From your Board of Directors

Happy New Year, and may 2024 be a joyful and successful year for you!

I'm writing this month to address a recurring topic. Once again, the Pinery Staff have received comments encouraging the expansion of recreational activities on Bingham Lake. In this case, an eighth-grade resident of the Pinery, writing in an impressively mature manner, cited the many enjoyable activities already facilitated by the Lake and added how allowing non-motorized boating activities would make it even better. He stated that it wouldn't be difficult to implement these privileges, given the existing boat ramp and parking availability at the Lake.

Undoubtedly, such activities would be very popular. However, as the writer also pointed out, there are valid and compelling reasons for tightly controlling what enters the water. Here's a little refresher course about the Lake:

- Bingham Lake is owned by Pinery Water and Wastewater District and serves as a water supply storage vessel for the entire District. Douglas County Parks, Trails & Building Grounds manages the Bingham Lake recreational facilities and the fishery.
- Bingham Lake draws fishers due to the various warm water game species that inhabit the lake, such as large-mouth bass, black crappie, walleye, blue gill yellow perch, channel catfish and wipers (hybrid white/stripe bass). An annual stocking program began in 2005 to ensure adequate numbers of fish are available to catch. In addition, a habitat enhancement project, periodic assessments, and requests for anglers to "catch and release" has helped maintain a quality fishery. The District participates in this annual fish stocking due to the water quality benefits of having a strong fish habitat in the lake.
- Currently the District prohibits any boating on or wading in the lake due to concerns of introducing Zebra or Quagga Mussels into the lake. Both are invasive species that would have a profound impact on the ecosystem and mechanical pumping operations at the lake.

Zebra mussels are native to the Black, Caspian and Azov Seas of Eastern Europe. They were discovered in the Great Lakes in Lake St. Clair in 1988 and have since spread to 33 states in the United States. Quagga mussels are native to the Dnieper River Drainage in the Ukraine. They were discovered first in the Great Lakes in the Erie Canal and Lake Ontario in 1989 and have since spread to 27 states in the United States. Once in North American waters, aquatic nuisance species often hitch rides to other bodies of water on the boats, trailers, and equipment that people transport from place to place. Given their ability to attach to hard surfaces and survive out of water for extended periods (+30 days), many infestations have occurred by adult mussels hitching rides on watercraft. The microscopic larvae also can be transported in bilges, ballast water, live wells, or any other equipment that holds water.

The State of Colorado has ramped up efforts to inspect all boats before entering State run reservoirs. Bingham Lake has no inspection program. Staff has been advised by a senior ranger for Douglas County Open Space that the Pinery should continue its policy of no watercraft on the Lake because it's just too risky without an inspection program in place. The costs of instituting and administering an inspection program at Bingham Lake would be prohibitive and could not guarantee the protection that the District desires.

As Bingham Lake is a community amenity, its first purpose is for water supply. Opening the lake to float devices may enhance its use in our community. However, when considering that action against the mission of the Pinery Water and Wastewater District, it does not align with what we are charged to do which is to "Provide Quality Water for Life". Ensuring the security of the District's water supply and infrastructure must be a higher priority than providing recreational opportunities to our community.



Rod Bergholm,
Director, Pinery Water and Wastewater District

While recognizing the attraction of additional water sports at the Lake, the Board of Directors are committed to continuing with its policy of prohibiting watercraft of any kind and swimming/wading on or in Bingham Lake to protect the integrity of the water supply and the District's infrastructure. Hopefully, all will agree that caution is the best policy, given all that is at risk. We must keep in mind the primary purpose of the Lake and protect those functions. And still, as our young resident stated, "Bingham Lake is such an amazing place!"

Please join us at our District Office for our monthly held Board Meetings at 6:00pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month.

Upcoming Board Meetings will be held at 6:00pm on Wednesday, Jan 17 2024
Wednesday Feb 21, 2024