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State fails to see immediate need for Lake Roland dredging

The State Water Resources Administration has thrown a wrench into plans to dredge the northern section of Lake Roland; a project that has been actively supported by the Ruxton - Riderwood - Lake Roland Improvement Association (RRLRIA) for the past six years.

At a hearing before a standing room only crowd of over 150 persons in Towson last week, an official of the Water Resources Administration recommended against issuing a permit for the dredging, saying that the environmental impact of the project had not been examined closely enough.

Michael A. Ports, Chief of the Watersheds Permits Division, said, "Our disagreement is not a matter of substance but rather of degree. We agree that dredging is needed, but we feel that the operation will have a greater impact on the fish and wildlife than the city's report indicates. We would like to see these differences cleared up before we issue a permit."

Although the lake lies in Baltimore County, Baltimore City has jurisdiction in this matter since the lake was originally created as a part of the city's water supply system in 1860.

George Wills, the former chairman of the Lake Roland Committee of the RRLRIA, related to the hearing officer the six-year effort of the association to save the lake.

Wills cited various studies that indicate that the lake is rapidly filling with silt and will eventually "die".

Addressing the environmental issues he asked, "Should we be selfish, enjoying the wildlife and its habitate for ourselves and watch the lake die, or should we try and ensure its continuance for future generations so that they may enjoy it also."

C. William Pacy, president of the RRLRIA testified that a poll of association members found over 900 for the dredging and less that 50 opposed.

At the hearing however, several environmental groups voiced their opposition to the plan on the grounds that it would seriously distrub a valuable wildlife area.

The initial plan calls for the removal of 210,000 cubic yards of silt at a cost of about $860,000, and for minor dredging every three years thereafter.

The operation will be jointly funded by the city and the county through a state allotment of Project Open Space funds.