



A History of the Rockville Chapter Lake Repairs in 1981

By Miles A. Greenbaum

At this time, mid-2020, plans are underway for the revitalization of the IWLA Rockville Chapter lake. Since the effort will be relatively expensive, the process will be slow in development to ensure that this project is being done properly.

The life of our lake has been threatened before, and this article will provide some historical perspective on that event.

The origin of the lake remains unclear. We obtained the parcel of property in 1953. Whether the lake, dam and overflow valve existed at that time or whether it was built by Chapter members has not been resolved. There are conflicting rumors but no actual facts.

What is clear, however, is that by 1980, muskrat tunnels had weakened the dam to the point where the dam was failing and steps had to be taken immediately to prevent the entire loss of the dam.

With thanks to Vic Ezerski, who was Chapter president at that time, we have access to some of the Chapter's old newsletters and minutes so that we can reconstruct the main steps in the process.

By September 1980, the lake had been drained by opening the overflow valve and plans were begun to restore the lake and lake dam. John Garner took primary responsibility for the repairs. In November, John and Win Drissel met with the Soil Conservation Group from the University of Maryland to get a better idea of what specifically had to be done to save the lake. By December, John's plans were approved, and he was authorized \$5,000 to begin work.

Actual work on the lake and dam repair started in February 1981. Over the years, a great deal of silt had accumulated in the lake and once the lake had drained and dried sufficiently, John arranged with a friend of his to come in and dredge the lake using a D-6 bulldozer. John had some really good friends, and we were only charged the cost of the diesel fuel. Vic Ezerski estimates that at completion of dredging, the depth of the lake was about 14 feet at the deepest point.



John Garner also arranged with another friend of his to obtain several dump trucks full of blue clay from West Virginia with which to line the lake to prevent leaks. Similarly, truckloads of rip-rap were used to line the lake side of the refurbished dam to prevent further incursions by musk rats or other invasive critters. Rocks and broken concrete were used to minimize erosion from high water on the Seneca Creek side. All the spoils from dredging the lake were used to fill in the entire area that is now the field behind the pavilion.



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While repairs were under way, Warren Fisher designed a series of pipes running on the bottom of the lake for aeration. They would be hooked up to a compressor for occasional aeration and the idea did work – for a while. The hoses were eventually damaged by being caught on lures and the compressor disappeared from the storage shed. Those hoses are still in the lake, but right now under what is probably several feet of new silt. It has, after all, been nearly 40 years.

With the dredging complete, the overflow valve was shut, refilling the lake quickly. At that time, there were several very active springs coming in from the north and east sides of the lake. Unfortunately, several years later when WSSC came through to lay their pipeline, the blasting that was required blocked off all but a small trickle from those original springs. We are now almost entirely reliant on rain and rain run-off from the state park.

But that's another story.