# Review of 2007 Inspection Program

<u>The software for the PDA for data collection and transfer to the DNR aggregate data base</u>

The programming software used to create the form used at Shell Lake was Pendragon. Pendragon was relatively intuitive and creating the electronic equivalent of the paper form was neither difficult nor time consuming.  The Palm software itself is also very user friendly; the installation of required software onto the city hall computer was very simple.   Data was transferred from the Palm device to the computer via a USB cradle.  To transfer data, a person only needed to push the button on the cradle after inserting the Palm into the cradle.   Data would then be transferred to the computer from the Palm in less than one minute.  This process made it easy to regularly back-up the Palm files.

<u>The required memory size of the PDAs</u>

Data stored in Microsoft Access 2007 format on the Palm takes relatively little space on the Palm's internal hard drive.  While an additional memory card was installed in the Palm, recorded data never exceeded the space available within the Palm itself.

<u>Battery life cycle and recharging scenarios</u>

The battery life of the Palm pilot was surprisingly long.  A typical day of use at the landing took only about 10 - 20% of total available battery charge.  The Palm was recharged overnight via a wall charger in the shack at the landing.  Because of the long battery life of the palm, inspectors were able to skip recharging the Palm over nights with potential storms in which lighting risked damaging the Palm.

<u>The inspectors ease of use and acceptance</u>

As with any new technology, there was a learning curve for the inspectors before they became proficient using the Palm device.  After about a week entering data, the Palm format approached the easy of entry as that of paper format.  However, because inspectors did not have to renter the data into an electronic format, entering data into the Palm ultimately became a much more efficient approach for inspectors compared to paper format.

The conditions the Palm was subject to at the landing were not probably as harsh as one would think.  The Palm is used when a boater uses the Shell Lake boat launch.  The majority of boaters go out on the water in pleasant weather.  Therefore, the primary conditions the Palm was subject to were sunny and temperate.  Since virtually no boaters go out in the pouring rain, the Palm was never subject to those conditions.  A light sprinkle is the heaviest of rain that the Palm was subjected to.  So, water exposure never seemed to be an issue this year.  The only slight issue with the Palm was screen visibility.  On occasion, during very sunny days, it was difficult to see the screen on the Palm clearly.  However, if shaded with a hand, the Palm was operable in all light conditions.

<u>Overview of Program</u>

The inspection program seemed to go very smoothly this year.  There were two noticeable differences this year compared to that of previous years.  The first, and most dramatic, difference this year was boaters' attitude towards the inspection program.  In the past, many of boaters throughout the season would have poor respect of and disagreement with the inspection program at Shell Lake.  This year, on the other hand, most boaters were either accepting or even encouraging of the inspection program.  Several times, local boaters commented on the poor condition of the Minog Flowage due to Eurasian Milfoil and were pleased of the contrasting good condition of Shell Lake.  They were more than happy to help support the inspection program at Shell Lake through the purchase of a launch permit.

The second major difference this year was the presence of an alternate inspector.  Many times throughout the summer the main inspectors would have schedule conflicts through which scheduling the alternate solved.  Also, Round Lake hours were much more easily attained with an alternate inspector.  However, as much as having an alternate helped scheduling, there seemed to be many schedule conflicts this year.  I am not sure what the job description for inspectors allows for time off, but that needs to be addressed for next year.

<u>For next year</u>

Many boaters made suggestions for changes at the landing for next year.   There were two main complaints about the landing.  One being traffic, the other night launching.   On occasion, there is a heavy amount of traffic at the Shell Lake boat landing.   A major source of delay at the landing is people getting their vehicles while having their boat tied up at the dock.  This prevents anyone from launching while a vehicle is retrieved.  With the current dock, I do not see that that issue can be addressed.  The other main source of delay is people loading and unloading their boat at the launch itself.  During busy times, this should be done in the parking lot.  To help prevent this practice a sign could be placed at the launch stating something to that effect.

The other improvement to the launch that could be done for next year would be for night launches.  Many fishermen do not get off the lake until well after sunset.  The main complaint among these fishermen is backing their trailer in the dark.  At night, it is difficult for a boater to see both their trailer and the dock itself.  Two reasonable suggestions have been made to assist these late night boaters.  One suggestion is that the city paints lines on the pavement showing the two launch lanes that boaters could use as back-up guides.  The other suggestion is lighting of the dock.  This could be done through flood lights shining on the dock, or bright paint on the dock supports that would be easy to see at night, or a combination of the two.