**CARYL'S LAKE: Information and Status**

by Larry DeLong, Town of Worcester Council Member

The Town of Worcester is a 47-square-mile municipality on I-88 in southeastern Otsego County, New York. There is a 23-acre spring-fed pond in the Town's northwestern corner which is called Caryl's Lake, named after Isaac Caryl, an early settler. Divers have said that it is 90 feet deep, which is unlikely. The Lake is part of 88 wooded acres owned by the Worcester Water District #2 on a hill about 600 feet above the valley of the Schenevus Creek (1801 feet elevation). It is dammed and has been a reservoir since 1887, although the State Health Department has lately required drilled wells from aquifers and has relegated the Lake to emergency back-up status for water supply. It needs filtration if it is ever to be used for drinking water again. It was last used to fight a large fire in the Worcester hamlet in 1994. The water district indebtedness will be paid off in 2026.

The Lake property is part of a quasi-wilderness area, with unique geology, hydrology, forestry and other natural features.

At one time the Lake was a State fishing access site, stocked with brown trout. There are also bass, perch and pickerel. The site had signs posted by the Conservation Department. At present, DEC will not re-establish a fishing site, although the local DEC officer is willing to patrol the area, and occasionally does so informally. He doesn't enforce local laws.

The Town and Water District have trouble keeping abusive people from despoiling the area, which is beautiful and might otherwise be pristine. In the summer, there is unauthorized large group camping there, featuring noise, garbage, out-of-state vehicles, ATV's, fireworks, felling of trees, pit latrines, many tents, etc. The Town Board passed a resolution in 1971 prohibiting camping, swimming, fires, etc., but attempts by the County Sheriff to enforce it have been unsuccessful because it does not have the force of local law. Neither the Town nor Water District has a police force, constable or safety officer.

The draft of a proposed local law was proposed which would designate the area as a nature preserve and set in motion an enforcement process against abuse. Its purpose is to permit public access while controlling density, damaging behavior and liability.

One issue is that there is only one legal access to the best part of the shoreline, which is a half-mile dirt right-of-way through private lands. The road is in very bad shape, with deep ruts and washed-out sections. It is best traveled by high four-wheel-drive vehicles or by skirting the road on private property. The Water District doesn't want to spend ratepayers' money for difficult and recurring repairs, and there is sentiment against improving access and thereby encouraging excessive public presence.

The area is not Town property, although the Town Board acts as the Water District Board. There is a paid Water Superintendent. The Town and District would like to make a nature preserve or similar concept work by providing at least a practical enforcement mechanism.