

Saddleback Ridge Wind, LLC // Natural Resource Protection Act (NRPA) and Site Location of Development Act applications

- *Exhibit 3: Report of Michael Lawrence dated October 4, 2011(re: Webb Lake)*

- Fmm Exhibit 3 -

REPORT
APPLYING THE STANDARDS
DEVELOPED IN THE 1989 MAINE'S FINEST LAKES STUDY
TO
WEBB LAKE AND ITS IMMEDIATE PHYSICAL FEATURES

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October 4, 2011

The Friends of Maine's Mountains asked me to review the 1989 Maine's Finest Lakes Study looking carefully at the assessment criteria utilized in the **SCENIC QUALITY** (pages 15 & 16) and **SHORELINE CHARACTER** (pages 17 & 18) sections of that report to compare those guidelines with plan studies and on-site observations of the Webb Lake landscape described in my December, 2010 Saddleback Wind Project Visual Quality Report.

It seemed to The Friends of Maine's Mountains that Webb Lake has outstanding or significant scenic qualities and outstanding or significant shoreline characteristics that make it eligible to be included in Maine's Finest Lakes Study.

The Maine Finest Lakes Study itself recognizes that its findings may be inaccurate.

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“Due to the large number of lakes in the state, as well as the relative lack of field surveys on these lakes, it is quite possible that some important features have been overlooked.”

In holding Webb Lake and its immediate environment alongside the study's criteria described in the Scenic Quality and Shoreline Character sections, it appears that some of Webb Lake's significant natural features were indeed overlooked and/or the Lake and its environs were not fully evaluated. This review demonstrates that Webb Lake was mistakenly omitted from Maine's Finest Lakes Study and needs to be recognized as a lake having either significant and/or outstanding character.

COMPARISON - WEBB LAKE WITH MAINE'S FINEST LAKES STUDY STANDARDS

SCENIC QUALITY

The **Overview** of the Scenic Quality section describes that only views from the lake were considered relevant to the study and the report assumes:

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“ 1). Landscapes of mountains, hills, and unaltered forested terrain adjacent to a lake are visually pleasing;

2). As the variety of landscape features increase, so does the overall scenic beauty of a lake.”

The landscape surrounding and visible from almost all areas on Webb Lake consists of an abundance and variety of mountains, hills, and unaltered forested terrain.

The **Overview** continues;

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“Based on these premises, the level of scenic quality of a lake is generally proportional to lake size and local topographical relief.”

Webb Lake is relatively large (2,100 acres) and the surrounding encircling topography at distances varying from 2 to 7 miles is dramatic (3,100 ft. Mount Blue, 2,500 ft. Hurricane Mountain, 2,900 ft. Blueberry Mountain, 3,500 ft. Jackson Mountain, 3,100 ft. Tumbledown Mountain, 2,700 ft. West Mountain, 2,500 ft. Walker Mountain, 2,500 ft. Spruce Mountain, 2,000 ft. Gleason Mountain, 2,100 ft. Kinney’s Head, 2,300 ft. Bald Mountain, 2,500 ft. Saddleback Mountain).

Forested hills rolling between the lake and mountaintops enhance the scenic qualities of many views and vistas from the lake. Webb Lake’s size and setting fulfill these conditions of the study’s portrayal of scenic quality.

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“The assessment considered the overall scenery of a lake, rather than scenery from a single view at specific locations.”

Scenic vistas surround and are visible from almost everywhere on Webb Lake. Views from Webb Lake satisfy this requirement of the study.

Under **Standards**, the report describes the assessment process.

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“The assessment process largely followed that described in Scenic Lakes Evaluation in Maine’s Unorganized Towns, prepared in 1987 as part of the Maine Wildlands Lake Assessment.”

An initial list of potentially scenic lakes was developed by visually inspecting topographic maps for areas of high relief. The edge index (ratio of shoreline length to surface area) was then calculated for each lake on the list.

To remain on this list, the lakes had to meet (one) the following criteria:

A. Exhibit a 300 ft. change in relief within 0.5 mi. of the lake or

The Webb Lake landscape has 250 ft. change in relief within 0.5 mi.

B. Exhibit a 700 ft. change in relief within 7.0 mi. or

The Webb locale has a 2,800 ft. change within 4 miles of the lake.

C. Have an edge index of at least 1.5

Webb Lake has an edge index of 1.950.

Webb Lake narrowly misses the criterion set for A (50 ft. short in 0.5 mi. or meets the 300 ft. relief change within 0.6 mi.) and greatly exceeds the requirements outlined in B and C. In any case, in order to remain on the list, lakes had to meet one of the three. Webb Lake goes far beyond two of the three.

Under these criteria, it appears that this resource should have been considered "outstanding".

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"The master list was further refined as follows:

D. Large lakes, greater than 1,000 ac. were removed if they had less than 4 areas of significant relief. "

Webb Lake has more than a dozen areas.

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Lakes that met all of the minimum standards were evaluated from the air. During the flight the following factors were evaluated:

A. Foreground and background relief.

Webb Lake has a high degree of background relief.

B. Number and distribution of physical features.

The area around Webb Lake has an abundance and variety of physical features.

C. Shoreline vegetational diversity

Webb's shoreline is diverse including large beaches, wetlands, and mature stands of deciduous and evergreen trees.

D. Special features [e.g. extreme water clarity]

Water appeared clear to me but I'm not sure how this is determined and compared.

E. Inharmonious development

The Webb Lake shoreline consists of a both heavily wooded undeveloped areas as well as clusters of seasonal camps. Development is generally set back within mature trees and feels in harmony with the landscape. While it is not a pristine landscape, it is harmonious.

The Scenic Quality section of the Maine's Finest Lakes Study concludes by describing how numerical ratings were given to each factor and lakes with ratings of 60 and above received an "outstanding" designation, 40-55 "significant".

It is unknown what numbers were assigned to Webb Lake but it is clear that Webb Lake fulfills well the standards outlined in this Scenic Quality section of the study.

SHORELINE CHARACTER

The **Overview** of the shoreline character section of the report defines physical features at the lake's edge and their relationship to recreational use of the lake.

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“Shore features such as beaches, ledges, and open areas are included to the extent that they enhance opportunities for swimming, diving, wading, camping, picnicking, fishing, or boating.”

While I did not conduct a detailed shoreline analysis, the fact that Mt. Blue State Park's is situated along and behind approximately one mile of open shoreline including a large sandy beach offering swimming, diving, wading, camping, picnicking, fishing and boating to the public illustrates how this particular part of the Webb Lake shoreline enhances recreational opportunities and fulfills the criterion.

In addition Webb Lake has even more beaches adjacent to private seasonal camps or summertime youth camps.

The large scale, heavily utilized public beach at Mt. Blue State Park is fulfills the standard outlined above to give the shoreline a significant or outstanding rating.

In the **Standards** section, the authors openly acknowledge that;

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“The shoreline assessment was limited to the 115 lakes flown for scenic assessment and that there is a lack of information, the resulting lake list may be incomplete and some lakes with significant or outstanding shoreline characteristics may have gone unreported.”

The presence of highly popular Mt. Blue State Park, its campground, swimming beach and boat launch offering public enjoyment and access to Webb Lake at this particular location illustrates the importance of this specific shoreline, qualifying it as a resource having significant or outstanding characteristics.

It appears from this review that Webb Lake may very well have gone unreported in Maine's Finest Lakes Study.

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“During the flights, three major features determined the significance of lakes for shoreline character: beaches, bedrock ledges and open shores.

“Beaches and bedrock ledges that were large and dominant were regarded as more significant than small narrow beaches and ledges. Open shorelines that offered public use opportunities, swimming, fishing, hiking and canoeing, were regarded as more significant than shorelines with little or no public use opportunity. A rating of high, medium, or low was assigned to each lake that was flown based on the overall significance of all shoreline character features. Additional lakes that have beaches were rated by resource experts. Lakes that received a rating of high were designated outstanding, and lakes rated as medium were designated significant. All lakes with beaches received a minimum rating of significant. If the beaches were large and extensive, or if other significant shoreline character features were found, the lakes were rated outstanding. An outstanding rating was given to any lakes with a high diversity of shore features or a unique shore feature.”

Webb Lake has an open shoreline that offers public use opportunities and fits the description for an outstanding resource. The beach area at Mt. Blue State Park is one of the lake’s outstanding features, permitting large numbers of people to enjoy all of the water oriented recreational activities described in this section of Maine’s Finest Lakes Study.

CONCLUSION

Webb Lake fulfills the description outlined on page 29 of Maine’s Finest Lakes Study as a lake whose important features were overlooked or unreported.

It is clear from analyzing Webb Lake in the light of the principles outlined in the Finest Lakes Study that this body of water fulfills the definitions for the label “significant” or “outstanding” as they relate to scenic quality and shoreline character.

The responsible conclusion to this review would be to include Webb Lake on the list of lakes included in Maine’s Finest Lakes Study.