



PORTLAND WATER DISTRICT POLICY FOR WATERSHED LAND ACQUISITION IN STANDISH

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define the District's watershed land acquisition priorities and to establish methods by which the District is to purchase property, acquire conservation easements, or negotiate landowner agreements within the Town of Standish for the purposes of protecting Sebago Lake from contamination. (A separate policy will establish priorities and methods to purchase watershed property outside of the Town of Standish).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Terms used in this policy are defined below:

Conservation Easement: Specified rights purchased from a landowner to enable the easement buyer to engage in or prohibit designated activities on the easement land.

Land Owner Agreement: Landowners agree to keep their land in an undeveloped or semi-developed condition because it has always been open, has potential for property tax savings through an abatement, or desire to keep certain views intact or keep lake or local stream water clean.

Undeveloped Property: Property that is in its natural state.

Two-mile Limit: A State law enacted in 1913 that prohibits bodily contact, but allows boating and fishing, in that portion of Sebago Lake that lies within a 2-mile radius of the water intakes for the Greater Portland system

POLICY

The District has separated the land proposed for acquisition into two levels. This was done in order to prioritize potential acquisitions. Properties in Level 1 are those most critical for protecting water quality in the Lower Bay of Sebago Lake. The District will seek to purchase these properties from willing sellers. Properties in Level 2 are desirable but less critical to acquire. The District will seek to negotiate conservation easements or enter into landowner agreements with the goal of keeping Level 2 parcels in their natural state.

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Level 1 – Priorities and justification

1. Properties on the west shore with frontage on the lake within the two-mile limit [see attached map].
A circulation study conducted in 1990 concluded that the flow in the Lower Bay is counter-clockwise with contaminants from the west shore flowing in the direction of the intakes. These acquisitions will remove all septic systems directly upstream of the intakes and reduce human activity within the two-mile limit.
2. Properties on the south side of Maple Street [see attached map].
Acquisition of these two remaining properties will create a continuous 200-foot buffer between Maple St. and Standish Brook to minimize contamination of the brook by runoff and septic systems.
3. Properties that abut PWD property and are within 500 feet of shoreline [see attached map].
Acquisition of these properties will provide a continuous 500-foot shoreline buffer around the entire Lower Bay of Sebago Lake to minimize contamination of the lake by runoff and septic systems.
4. Additional properties within the watershed of the two-mile which are environmentally sensitive or which pose a demonstrated threat to Lower Bay water quality.
The State Drinking Water Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) rates as greatest risk to drinking water sources those activities with known water quality impacts. The second most significant factor in prioritizing risk is proximity to intakes. Acquiring environmentally sensitive properties within the watershed of the two-mile limit will minimize these high priority risks.

Note: Level 1 Parcels are identified on the attached map entitled “Portland Water District Level 1 Land Acquisition Priorities”

Level II – Priorities and justification

1. Undeveloped parcels or portions of parcels which abut the shoreline of Standish Brook, Stickey River, Rich Mill Pond or Outlet Brook.
These streams flow directly into the Lower Bay. Acquiring conservation easements or negotiating other landowner agreements will keep land in an undeveloped state and have a lesser impact on Standish property tax revenues than would outright purchase.
2. Undeveloped parcels or portions of parcels which abut the shoreline of Sebago Lake outside the two-mile limit.
Any developed shoreline property has an impact on lake water quality from septic systems, roadways, timber harvesting, lawn grooming, recreational activities, etc. Acquiring conservation easements or negotiating other landowner agreements will keep land in an undeveloped state and have a lesser impact on Standish property tax revenues than would outright purchase.