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USACE hosts open house May 1 in Charlton, Mass., for Buffumville Lake Master Plan revision

CONCORD, Mass. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District will host an open house May 1, 2024, in Charlton, Mass., to kick off a process to revise the 1976 Buffumville Lake Master Plan for the Buffumville Lake project in Charlton.

The open house will be held from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Charlton Public Library Community Meeting Room at 40 Main Street in Charlton. There will be no formal presentation during the session, but USACE members will be on hand to share information about the revision process, provide the general schedule and gather initial feedback from the public.

The master plan serves as the strategic land use management document that guides the comprehensive management and development of all recreational, natural and cultural resources throughout the life of the water resource development project. It defines how USACE will manage the resources for public use and conservation.

The current Buffumville Lake Master Plan was last approved in 1976 and needs revision to address changes in regional land use, population, outdoor recreation trends, and the USACE management policy. Key topics to be discussed in the revised master plan include updated land use classifications, new natural and recreational resource management objectives, recreation facility needs, and special issues such as invasive species management and threatened and endangered species habitat. The revision does not address the technical and operational aspects of the Buffumville Lake project related to flood risk management or the water conservation missions of the project.

An initial 30-day public comment period will begin May 1 and end May 31. During this time, members of the public can submit comments, suggestions and concerns about the master plan.

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Comments must be submitted in writing at the open house or digitally via the comment form on the Buffumville Lake Master Plan revision website at <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/Buffumville-Lake/Buffumville-Lake-Master-Plan/>. The website also contains a presentation which will be available during the open house that provides details about an additional comment period that will open after the draft report is released (currently scheduled for June 2025).

The Buffumville Lake project is located along the Little River and South Fork River in the upper Thames River Basin. After hurricanes Connie and Diane caused catastrophic damage in the surrounding towns in 1955, construction of Buffumville Dam began in 1956 and was completed in April 1958 at a cost of \$3,068,000. It is a rolled earthfill dam that is 3,255 feet long and 57.5 feet high. Buffumville Dam helps to reduce flooding in Webster and in small towns downstream along the French River to Putnam, Conn., and optimizes its flood protection by coordination its operation with Hodges Village Dam in Oxford.

USACE manages the natural resources at Buffumville Lake for multiple uses to include flood risk management, wildlife habitat, forest production, watershed protection and outdoor recreation. While the main purpose of Buffumville Lake is to provide flood risk management to the Thames River Basin, over the years the lake has become a recreational draw for approximately 140,000 visitors a year. With seven miles of trails, 480 acres of land, 200 acres of water, picnic areas, a swimming beach, 18-hole disc golf course, and a boat launch, the lake can accommodate all kinds of outdoor enthusiasts.

For more information about Buffumville Lake, visit the project website at <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/Buffumville-Lake/>.

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