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Boats rest on Gleniffer Lake reservoir, in photo from Carefree Resorts website. The natural areas on shoreline will be protected from further development under new rules to manage the shoreline.

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Red Deer Advocate

Development capped

By Paul Cowley - Red Deer Advocate

Published: February 04, 2009 7:21 AM

Existing Gleniffer Lake resorts cannot expand and no new resorts will be allowed under proposed Red Deer County development rules for the reservoir.

The Gleniffer Reservoir Shorelands Area Structure Plan also prohibits any development within 300 metres of the shoreline. To protect wildlife, future subdivisions must leave at least half the land between the development and the reservoir as permanent open space to serve as a wildlife habitat corridor.

To put the brakes on widespread development, the county will allow only 199 conservation residential lots in the 30 square kilometres covered by the plan, and no more than 32 per quarter section.

Red Deer County council approved first reading for the plan Tuesday and a public hearing will be held at a future date not yet determined.

Councillor David Hoar, who sat on the committee that worked on the plan, held no illusions that all involved will be satisfied. Planners, councillors and members of the public all disagreed with each other at some stage of the process, he said. Some wanted a freeze on all development, while others wanted the door opened to much more. The proposed plan comes somewhere in the middle.

“Tongue in cheek, we’ve done a good job; we’ve got everybody ticked at us,” said Hoar.

County manager Curtis Herzberg said the plan recognizes the strategic importance of the reservoir, which was created in the 1980s when the Dickson Dam was built. The goal was to regulate the river and maximize the benefits to downstream users in Alberta and neighbouring provinces.

Concerns have been voiced in recent years that the primary purpose of the reservoir was being overlooked by those who were more interested in its recreational possibilities. To reinforce the intended role of the reservoir, the reference to “lake” was removed in this update of the Gleniffer Lake Shorelands Area Structure Plan.

Councillor Jim Wood supports the plan and its measures to protect the shoreline and wildlife. It also improves the standard for infrastructure and clearly outlines how much development will be allowed.

Existing development standards are toughened up in the new plan. Now, all new developments must be served by communal water and sewer systems and have paved access roads to the nearest paved county route.

Instead of resorts, bed and breakfasts and guest ranches will be encouraged.

Concerns were raised by Councillor Jim Lougheed, who chaired a liaison committee overseeing the new plan along with county staff. The committee was disbanded under the new area structure plan.

Lougheed said it was a “huge mistake” to do away with the committee, which had Alberta Environment input.

Herzberg said the disbanding of the liaison committee does not mean Alberta Environment will have less influence.

The county is committed to maintaining the integrity of the reservoir and the environment department will remain involved.


“Administration is not making the recommendation to ignore Alberta Environment at all,” he said. “(The department’s involvement is) a must because of the uniqueness of this area.”

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