Summary of Lakeland District Informational Meeting re: Lake Water Quality

The **Lakeland District Informational Meeting** focused on **lake water quality, shoreline management, and environmental protection**, with presentations by experts and a Q&A session. Treena McAlpine, Reeve for the District of Lakeland, opened the Informational Meeting by expressing deep gratitude to Council, staff, presenters, and attendees, emphasizing the importance of community involvement in protecting local lakes. She underscored that while the District is committed to environmental protection, the authority over water bodies lies with the Water Security Agency, whose experts were invited to present. The meeting, initially conceived last August, reflects a shared council vision that preserving the health of Emma, Christopher, Anglin, and McPhee Lakes must guide all future planning and decisions.

Key Topics Covered:

1. **Water Quality Protection**:
    - Emphasis on protecting all lakes within the District of Lakeland.
    - Recognition that water management is a shared federal, provincial, and municipal responsibility.
2. **Shoreline Management**:
    - **Adam Matichuk (Manager Water & Wastewater, Water Security Agency)** presented the regulations and types of permits required for shoreline work and aquatic habitat protection.
    - Updates on **infrastructure improvements** to a number of structures within the Spruce River Diversion Project at Anglin, Emma, and Christopher lakes by **Spencer McNie (Supervisor Operations & Maintenance North, Water Security Agency)**.
3. **Water Quality Challenges**:
    - **Dr. Kerri Finlay (U of R Professor – Co-Director, Institute of Environmental Change & Society)** discussed the Emma Lake eutrophication process (mesotrophic with eutrophic trends), worsening clarity, and listed some potential climate change impacts.
    - Proposed targeted strategies: managing aquatic plants, controlling septic leaks, and reducing fertilizer use.
4. **Aquatic Invasive Species**:
    - **Jeri Geiger (Team Lead, Fisheries Management Specialist, Fisheries Unit Ministry of Environment)** outlined prevention programs and mandatory watercraft inspection stations.
    - Highlighted risks of zebra and quagga mussels and promoted “clean, drain, dry” practices.

5. **Local Concerns and Vegetation Control**:
    - Discussions on **weed growth**, especially **northern milfoil**, and its ecosystem impact.
    - Permits required for vegetation removal, and any other shoreline alterations. Chemical applications are strictly prohibited without the proper permit approvals from Water Security Agency.
6. **Emma Lake Drainage Issues**:
    - Residents raised concerns over drainage, runoff, and weed growth affecting recreation.
    - Authorities agreed to monitor and collaborate on control projects, issuing permits where appropriate.
7. **Lake Management Strategy**:
    - Call for a **comprehensive lake strategy**, factoring in runoff, sediment, and infrastructure solutions.
    - Consideration of **green infrastructure funding** and deeper scientific study.
8. **Water Quality Solutions**:
    - Proposed actions include catch basins, vegetation swales, and wetland restoration.
    - Revisions to the stewardship bylaw and collaborative provincial efforts are underway to improve lake health.

Conclusion: The meeting highlighted both challenges and potential solutions for maintaining lake health in the District of Lakeland. Collaboration between government, experts, and local stakeholders was emphasized as essential for long-term success.