

# Hiring a Lake Consultant: Perspectives From a Part-time Lake Consultant

Dave Matthews  
Upstate Freshwater Institute

NYSFOLA 2025 Annual Conference  
May 2, 2025



# Introduction

- Why me?
  - Because NYSFOLA asked
  - Education and lake consulting experience
  - Lake associations, universities, HOAs, local government, state agencies, Fortune 500 companies
- Trust
  - No names



# Preview

- What is a Lake Consultant and how can they help us?
- Do we need a Lake Consultant?
- How do we find a Lake Consultant?
- What should we look for and what should we avoid?
- How much do they cost and where do we find funding?
- Do we need a written agreement and what should it include?
- Keeping things on track
- Please share your experiences

# What is a Lake Consultant?

- Someone who provides expert advice on lakes and lake management
  - Professional, qualified and capable
  - Equipped for the work
  - Objective and unbiased
- They come in all shapes and sizes
  - Lake management firms
  - Academics
  - Not-for-profits
  - Engineering/consulting firms



# How Can a Lake Consultant Help Us?

- Address a specific issue – invasive macrophytes, HABs, lake level
- Develop a management plan
- Build consensus
- Assist with permits and regulations
- Learn more about your lake
- Education and outreach
- Monitoring
- Laboratory testing
- Analysis and interpretation of data
- Grant writing



# Can We Do It Ourselves?

- Address a specific issue – invasive macrophytes, HABs, lake level
- Develop a management plan
- Foster consensus
- Assist with permits and regulations
- Learn more about your lake
- Education and outreach
- Monitoring
- Laboratory analyses
- Analysis and interpretation of data
- Grant writing

Probably  
not.





# How Do We Find a Lake Consultant?

- Request for Proposal (RFP)
- NYSFOLA
- NALMS
- Lake associations
- Internet search



# What Should We Look For?

- Expertise
- Focus
- Enthusiasm
- Professionalism
- Resources
- Stability
- Transparent costs
- Insurance
- Realistic objectives
- References
- Examples of prior work





# What Should We Avoid?

- Being in a hurry
- Overemphasis on speed, price
- Silver bullets
  - When your only tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail
  - Unrealistic expectations
- Requests for upfront payment
- Does size matter?



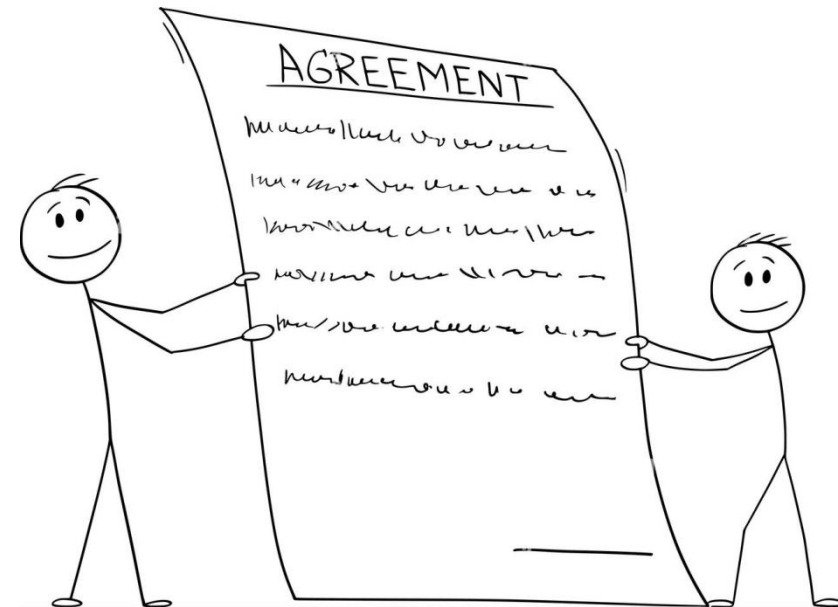
# What Should We Expect to Pay and Where Do We Find the Funding?

- It's complicated
  - Hourly rates - \$70-\$300/hour (per person)
  - Gear – boats, monitoring equipment, chemicals
  - Lab analyses - \$15-\$200/test
  - Mobilization and travel
- Funding sources
  - State grants
  - Local government
  - Foundations
  - Lake association funds



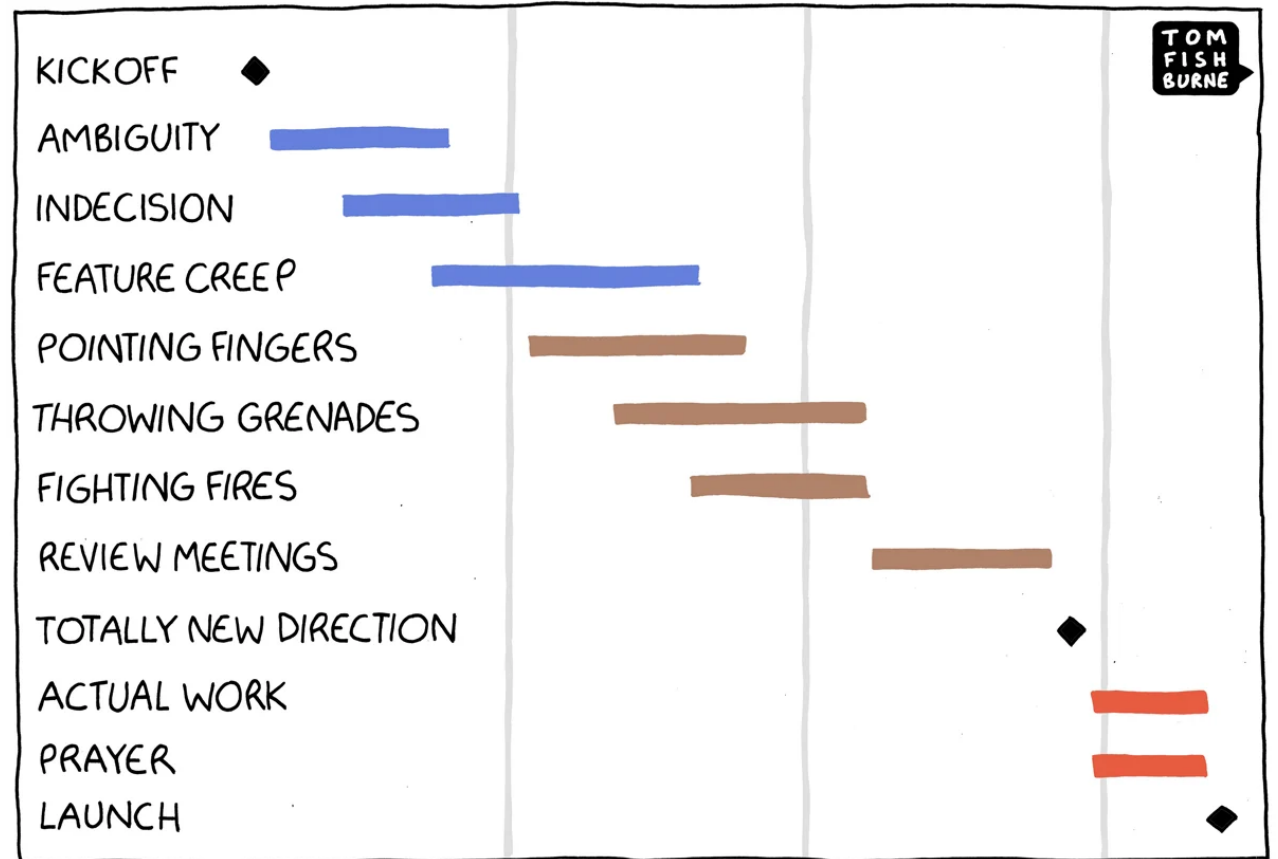
# Do We Need a Written Agreement and What Should it Include?

- Yes, you really do!
  - Detailed list of tasks
  - Deliverables
  - Schedule
  - Budget – not to exceed
  - Insurance – worker's comp, liability
  - Billing schedule linked to deliverables
  - Be adaptable



# Keeping Things On Track

- Communication is key
  - A single point of contact – if it's everyone's job, it's no one's job
  - Request periodic updates



# Summary

- Lake consultants have a variety of capabilities
- Find one that best suits your needs
- Seek advice from other lake associations
- Funding – a talk for another day
- Get it in writing
- Someone needs to keep things on track





Questions?

Please Share  
Your Experiences

