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County board OKs study of Round Lake flow controls

[Terrell Boettcher](#) / News Editor
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Taking action towards resolving Round Lake watershed issues, the Sawyer County Board voted last Thursday to authorize Short Elliott Hendrickson (SEH) consulting engineers out of Rice Lake to perform a six-week \$12,800 study of the impacts of lowering the Highway NN culverts to meet DNR requirements for passage of water in Osprey Creek.

SEH also will study the impacts of replacing or modifying the current Carlson Road dam at the outlet of Little Round Lake to reflect the proposed change in state-authorized water levels to reflect natural variations in the lake.

SEH engineer Bernard Lenz will report the results of the study to the board in early November, including estimated costs of any construction work. The money for the study will come out of the county's dam maintenance fund, which now has \$50,000 in it.

Lenz said the bottoms of the two culverts on Highway NN now are one foot higher than the natural channel, so they back up water. They also cause the elevation of Osprey Lake to go higher.

"Our first step (in the study) will be to determine where we need to set the elevation of those culverts and if they're large enough or need to be increased in size," Lenz said.

If the dam at Carlson Road is increased in size, it would let more water through and raise the flood elevation of Osprey Lake, Lenz added. If it is made smaller by increasing the control structure, that would increase the flood elevation of Round Lake. That would require the obtaining of flood easements from shore owners, which is "almost an unobtainable thing in this day and age on a developed lake," he added.

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The lowering of the NN culverts would let more water out of Osprey Lake, so the proposal would look at letting more water into Osprey Lake through the Carlson Road dam, Lenz said. Increasing the hydraulic capacity of the culverts and Little Round dam would give some relief in the event of a 100-year flood, he added.

All proposals assume that the beaver dams below Osprey Lake will remain in place. (Older maps list Osprey Lake by its former name, Squaw Lake).

If the LCO Tribe opposes the lowering of the NN culverts in order to save a wild rice bed as it has said it will, then the controls of the dam could be changed to pass the required minimum flow rather than opening up the whole control structure, Lenz said. That would allow "a little more storage in Round and Little Round while still passing the base flow and it won't change the base flood elevation," he said.

He added that once SEH completes its hydraulic study and the county chooses an action option, the county would have to hire an engineer to design the new structure(s).

Despite more than six inches of rain last week, Round Lake is still several inches below the Carlson Dam sill at 1,344 feet and one foot below the normal elevation of 1,345 feet.

A number of Round Lake Property Owners Association (RLPOA) representatives as well as LCO Tribal Attorney Kris Goodwill attended last week's meeting.

Supervisor Shirley Riedmann said the LCO Tribe "is not saying 'no' to this (proposal at this point). They are interested in moving forward with us on this. The issue becomes one of the rice and the walleye spawning beds. They indicate it could be a federal issue, but we don't know that until a dam structure design goes to the WDNR (to evaluate a permit request). The DNR will conduct public hearings and the tribe then becomes more actively involved."

Dan Tyrolt of the LCO Conservation Department said, "The reason why we want to be careful with the beaver dam is because it's controlling the height of Osprey Lake; if you take it out, the lake will drop 2 1/2 feet. That dam has been there 40-50 years and I can guarantee it's not going to be blown out. It's a major factor for the ecosystem of Osprey Lake."

Lenroot issue

A group of Lenroot residents questioned why the board in July rejected a zoning committee recommendation to deny a rezone for 33 acres owned by Aaron Sunderland west of Pfeifer Road for the purpose of creating 10 residential lots. Earlier, the Town of Lenroot Board had approved the rezone from Agricultural One and Forestry One to Recreational/Residential One.

The county board ordered the committee to come back with an ordinance allowing the rezone and said it

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then would vote to enact or reject the proposal.

In a letter to the county board, Pfeifer Road residents Bill and Lauri Perlick said they want the board to "extend to us (hobby farmers) the same protections regularly given to lakeshore residents. Like lakeshore properties, agricultural land is a finite resource in Sawyer County." She said that although a majority of area residents are opposed to the proposed development, the county board "chose to ignore that testimony."

Board member Nate DeLong said he felt the zoning committee "made a mistake" by recommending denial. This 33 acres is "not prime agricultural land and there's plenty of area for wildlife to exist. There's no wetlands listed. There's no shoreline except the wild (Namekagon) river and that has a buffer." He added that properties within a mile are zoned RR1, RR2, C-1, F-1, Ag-1 and Ag-2.

Riedmann said she also voted against denial because "I didn't see anything that would be incompatible with what's going on."

Robert Vitcenda said county conservationist Dale Olson feels drilling 10 wells at that location (for 10 lots) "wouldn't have an impact" on other wells in that area.

Zoning committee chairman Jim Bassett said the committee asked for more input from the town board and tabled the issue until the committee's October meeting. Neither zoning administrator Bill Christman nor corporation counsel T.J. Duffy were at last Thursday's meeting to answer questions.

In another zoning/santation matter, the board voted to petition the state legislature to continue funding the Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (POWTS) assistance program for homeowners.

Also known as the Wisconsin Fund, this pays 50 percent of the cost of replacing or rehabilitating failing septic systems. Last year, 20 owners of septic systems in the county received \$60,872 in assistance. Over the past 29 years, a total of 883 systems in the county have received \$1,536,820 under the Wisconsin Fund.

Long-term care

The board voted to support creation of a Family Development Council for the Northwest Wisconsin Long Term Care Options Consortium, which is scheduled to start up on Jan. 1, 2009. The board appointed Dale Schleeter to serve as the county's representative.

In other actions, the board:

- Voted to enter 997 acres that it recently purchased from the state Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL) into the county forest program so the balance of state funding may be obtained.
- Approved 2008 salary schedules for county employees not represented by unions. There are "not too many adjustments; most of the salaries are pretty close to the comparables (in other counties)," said Human Resources Manager Carol Larson. These employees will get a two percent increase on Feb. 1 and another one percent increase on Aug. 1, consistent with settlements between the county and bargaining units.
- Approved a sublease between Horizon Christian Fellowship and tower owner American Tower on one of the radio communications towers used by Sawyer County near Chippewa Trail, as long as Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations are met.
- Voted to reduce the price of 2005 Sawyer County platbooks from \$35 to \$20 per book to spur sales of the remaining books. To date, the county has sold 1,861 of the 2,600 platbooks that were printed. The county will develop a new platbook next year.
- Voted to create the position of assistant maintenance and grounds supervisor for a proposed wage of \$17.48 per hour plus 2008 across-the-board wage increases granted to all union positions.
- Approved an agreement with the professional employees bargaining unit providing a temporary upgrade of pay for personal care workers performing skilled care duties for clients who reside close to that worker's house. Larson said this will save the county money because home health aides won't have to travel long distances to those clients.
- Approved a 911 property address signage and maintenance contract for 2008 with Marilyn Preston, who will receive \$60 per new, replacement or summary sign (an increase of \$5 over previous contract) plus \$15 for locating each new number or sign with the geographical positioning system (GPS).

The county also will pursue the elimination of duplicate road names in order to reduce problems for emergency response personnel. For example, there are currently two Boylan Roads, three Olson Roads, four River Roads and six Anderson Roads/Lanes in the county. One suggestion was that the road with the most year-round mailing addresses keep its name; the others would have to change their names through a municipal approval process.

The county also will seek to have alphabetical letters removed from property addresses; the U.S. Postal Service said it would approve this.

- Voted to provide up to \$3,000 as a match with the Hayward Lakes Visitor and Convention Bureau for a new printing of 10,000 Sawyer County sportsperson's recreation maps. "This is the most popular map in the county," said Hal Helwig.

- Voted to oppose a proposed state Assembly Bill (AB 496) which would limit the public's ability to search government web site data bases to find out how much property tax is paid by individual property owners. Under the bill, the web user could find out the amount of taxes paid only by parcel number or street address.

The board supports the Wisconsin Land Information Officers Association, which says the ability to search

by owner's name on a county assessment public portal "is a decision that should be determined by each county board."

County Clerk Kris Mayberry said that "While it is useful to have that information available" to people who live far from the courthouse, "there is the chance of abuse by crackpot marketers. That's the age we live in."

Comp Plan Committee

The board appointed the following individuals to the Sawyer County Comprehensive Plan Development Committee:

Bass Lake, Pete Sanders; Couderay (township), Jim Bassett; Draper, Edward Peters; Edgewater, Gene Schmidt; Hayward (township), Curt Scherer; Hayward (city), John McCue; Hunter, Leonard Eckerly; Lenroot, Dan Dums; Meadowbrook, Gene Thompson; Meteor, Dale Olson (alternate Jim Surber); Radisson (township), Ronald Roberts; Round Lake, Kay Wilson; Sand Lake, Elaine Nyberg; Winter (township), Arlene Bishop (alternates Steve Helmers and Ralph Pett); Winter (village), Duane Marten (alternates Randall Hayward and Calvin Blair).

Three towns and three villages currently have no representatives on the committee. Board chairman Hal Helwig said they have until Oct. 18 to nominate someone to serve on the group.

Tuscobia Trail Committee

The board appointed nine individuals to the Tuscobia Trail Enhancement Project Committee: Jim Bassett, Couderay (township); Ernie Augesen, Couderay (village); Bill Heath, Draper; Marshall Ruegger, Ojibwa (alternate Fred Luethold); Ron Roberts, Radisson (township); Brian Barkey, Radisson (village); Wayne Geist, Town of Winter; and Randy Hayward, Village of Winter.

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