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SEH submits recommendation for Round Lake watershed

Project centers on the lowering culverts on NN



[Will LaBreche](#) / Web Editor/Staff Writer/Photographer
Last updated: Friday, November 09th, 2007 09:23:14 AM

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The final recommendation for the Round Lake watershed has been received by the county from Short Elliot and Hendrickson Inc. (SEH) engineering and was the key topic of discussion at the Land and Water Committee meeting last Friday.

As County Conservationist Dale Olson reported, the recommendation from SEH is entirely contingent on the lowering of the Highway NN culverts to the streambed. This action however, is a sticking point for the LCO tribe, fearful that the lowering of the culverts will result in the loss of a wild ricing area in that immediate vicinity.

Based on SEH's report, according to Olson, after the culverts are lowered, a new concrete box will replace the existing wooden box at the Carlson Dam. This new box would be 10-feet wide, six-feet tall and 50-feet long. Set apart in front of the box, a 12-foot, v-notched weir would be installed, with the notch providing a consistent base flow, Olson said. As a downside, Olson noted the notch would also frequently become cluttered with beaver debris, meaning his department would need to keep a close eye on the weir.

Olson further added that SEH has proposed a contingency plan if the culverts under Highway NN were not lowered. In this plan, the wooden box structure would be left as is and a v-notched weir would be installed. However, SEH, as Olson said, predicts "very little gain" from the second option. The total cost to the county would be \$25,000, a drastically smaller figure than that which would be required to complete the full project.

To this point, the LCO tribe has not responded to the county as to whether the wild ricing area was a natural occurrence or a planted bed.

Committee member Shirley Riedmann said that even though the SEH recommendation is in place, nothing can be done until a determination is made for the lowering of the culverts.

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Riedmann stated that the recommendation will be discussed at a Round Lake Task Force meeting Thursday, Nov. 8, when the issue will then be passed to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

At the DNR level, public comments will be sought along with a potential environmental impact statement. So, as Riedmann said, "it's not a done deal."

But as Olson said, "I think we know it's a planted (wild rice) bed and it's not very viable right now."

"I think we have to design everything based on NN being lowered," he added.

No matter what becomes of the project however, the county will still seek a modification of the 1941 order to reflect the natural variations of the lake.

Taking action, the Land and Water Committee moved to recommend to the Finance Committee that \$175,000 be set aside to fund the project.

As mentioned, the Round Lake Task Force will hold a meeting on Nov. 8 beginning at 1 p.m. at the courthouse where further discussion of SEH's recommendation will take place. The entire SEH report is available at the Land and Water Department's Web site under www.sawyercountygov.org with full coverage of the Task Force meeting highlighted in next week's newspaper.

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