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After 5 years, committee makes tentative Round Lake recommendation

[Will LaBreche](#) / Staff Writer
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After five years and countless hours of meetings and discussion, the county has finally arrived at a tentative recommendation concerning the Round Lake watershed.

On Monday, the Land and Water Committee discussed a pair of options presented by the Round Lake Task Force regarding how to move forward with a management plan for the watershed, and though some dissenting opinions were voiced at the meeting, the committee voted to recommend a single option which was an integration of the two proposed.

As reported in last week's newspaper, the two original options came from the Round Lake Property Owners Association (RLPOA) and from a technical committee's recommendations from August of 2006.

Considering both, the committee this week voted to accept portions of both into a single, unified proposal which will now be passed on for full county board consideration at it's September meeting.

The recommendation, pending a feasibility review by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) prior to September's county board meeting, is as follows:

- Change the 1941 Public Service Commission (PSC) order to reflect the natural variation of lake water levels;

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- Lower the Highway NN culverts to meet DNR requirements;
- Abandon the Lake Placid dam;
- Request DNR action to address the culvert and fill on private property between Little Round and Osprey lakes to allow natural flow during high water events;
- Replace the present Carlson dam with a more permanent, wider concrete dam that will have higher flow rates than the present dam or possibly make changes to the current structure if those modifications can achieve management goals;

present dam or possibly make changes to the current structure if those modifications can achieve management goals;

- Initiate beaver dam management on private, public and tribal lands with possible guidance coming from the Beaver Task Force, which includes managing all future beaver dam activity in that area.

As noted, this recommendation is tentative pending input from the DNR, but will also be reviewed by tribal and county legal counsels — a conference which in part will undoubtedly be centered on the removal of beaver dams on tribal land and whether lowering the NN culverts would eliminate a small portion of ricing area used by the Lac Courte Oreilles tribal members.

Early Monday, the RLPOA submitted four questions to the county which they said will be answered by an independent engineering firm the association has retained for its own use.

However, as committee member Shirley Riedmann stated, this was irrelevant to the discussion at hand because the RLPOA retained the firm on its own accord and that the county has spent a great deal of taxpayer money on the SEH Engineering study, and that the issue needs to move ahead without potential differing opinions from outside engineers with a comprehensive study already complete.

The main issue here seemed to be RLPOA's disagreement with a "passive system," a move that would eliminate a dam at Carlson Road altogether and return the watershed to a more natural state. In a post-meeting conversation with RLPOA's Al Reinemann, he stated that as long as the county designs a structure at Carlson Road that manages the water flow, this becomes a more agreeable option.

About the meeting and the tentative recommendation, Reinemann said, "it's the first breath of fresh air in five years."

As mentioned, the recommendation can now be turned over to the DNR for their consideration before coming before the Sawyer County Board of Supervisors in September.

Comments: will.labreche@mx3.com

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