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County seeks permit to replace Little Round Lake dam

 by Terrell Boettcher
 News Editor

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At their Oct. 12 meeting, Sawyer County's Conservation and Zoning Committee acted on several matters relating to the Round Lake water system.

County Conservation and Zoning Administrator Dale Olson said he and the Department of Natural Resources agree it's best to wait until spring to remove and backfill the county-owned diversion dam, canal and lagoon between Placid Lake and the northeast end of Round Lake. During the project, McClaine Road will be closed.

The county has all the permits in hand to do the project. But if the project were done yet this fall, "It would be "dangerous to operate in frozen (soil) conditions," said DNR water management engineer Frank Dallam. Bruce Paulsen said he and fellow committee member Chuck Gundersen met with DNR officials and the consensus is to work on removing the Carlson Road bridge and dam at the outlet of Little Round Lake, installing a box culvert there at the natural streambed level, and applying to the state to rescind the 70-year-old order that set Round Lake's permitted water level range.

Dallam said the county needs to apply for a permit and have a specific set of plans to alter the 70-year-old Carlson Road structure. There originally was a ridge there and a channel was dredged and dug, he added: "I don't believe there was an outlet there." The old outlet was to the east at Thunderbird Road, he indicated.

The county has retained Short Elliott Hendrickson (SEH) consulting engineers to prepare the county's petition to rescind the 1941 lake level order and design the Carlson Road dam removal and box culvert installation.

Paulsen and Olson agreed to get cost estimates for the Carlson Road project. County board member Warren Johnson said the estimated cost is \$8,000 for engineering and \$120,000 for the project—less if the county did the work.

The committee instructed Olson to apply to the DNR for a dam removal permit.

The Round Lake Property Owners Association (RLPOA) has hired its own engineers to review the water system and will develop a long-term recommendation.

With rainfall and snow melt, the water level this year on Round Lake reached 1,345.16 feet, or 21 inches higher than the spring 2010 low point and slightly above the maximum mandated by the 1941 Public Service

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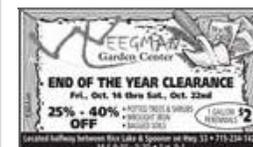
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Commission order. By late September, the level receded to 1344.74 feet, almost right at the "normal" level mandated by the PSC.

RLPOA vice-president Jim Purdin said, "This incredible recovery was not aided by anyone's efforts to manage or operate elements of the system currently in place." With no stop logs currently in place, "Water can flow readily out of Little Round Lake into the channel that leads to Osprey Lake. However, downstream obstructions in the channel and in Osprey Creek, including vibrant vegetative growth in the channel constructed according to the 1941 order and the presence of semi-permanent beaver dams, severely restrict flow at levels below the PSC-set normal. These obstructions have rendered the Carlson Road dam totally inconsequential, with minimal outflow when water is in the normal range even though no stoplogs are in place," Purdin said.

"In the short term, assuming we see precipitation near historical averages, the system should work reasonably well to maintain lake levels in the range of the 1941 PSC ordered 'normal,'" Purdin said.

The committee agreed to seek \$2,500 to purchase software so that County Land Records GIS specialist Brian DeVries can map the floodplain elevations in the Couderay River watershed. A land owner can then find out if a parcel is buildable and if he must purchase flood insurance.

County Corporation Counsel T.J. Duffy said the zoning and conservation department "should enforce the most accurate information in its possession," whether that is from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or developed by the county itself.

Frac sand etc.

After attending a recent conference on "frac sand" mining, County Assistant Conservationist Tim Seidl reported that there are potential frac sand mining sites in the western fringe of the county. So far, the county has had no applications for frac sand mines, which have sparked both an economic boom and environmental controversy in parts of western Wisconsin.

Frac sand is used by the oil and gas industry to more easily extract oil and gas from shale formations, such as the Bakken Formation in western North Dakota.

Issues associated with frac sand mining and sand washing facilities include silica dust, impacts on well water, erosion and heavy truck traffic on town roads not designed to handle it, Seidl said.

Olson said frac sand from this area could be shipped by boats on Lake Superior.

A small amount of overburden would be removed to get at the sand, Olson indicated. After the sand is removed, state code requires the owners to restore the pit area.

Linda Zillmer of Birchwood suggested the county should look at creating a mining zone district, as Barron County has done.

Cell towers

The zoning and conservation committee forwarded a proposed cell tower control ordinance for a public hearing on Nov. 18.

The draft cell tower/telecommunications facility ordinance has been reviewed and discussed at previous county committee and local town board meetings.

Towers would be allowed by conditional use permit with a \$2,000 fee. They could be no higher than 300 feet above the original ground surface. They could be no closer to any residence or property line than the approved height of the tower

New towers must be of self-collapsing design or have a designated fall zone. Towers will have to be screened with trees so they cannot be seen from ground level.

Towers could not be lit except as required by the FAA or FCC, and red lights would be preferred to white lights.

The tower applicant/owner would have to provide a \$30,000 security bond to ensure the removal of the facility and restoration to its pre-construction

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LCO hatchery

LCO Tribal Conservation Department staff member Dan Tyrolt reported that the tribe's fish hatchery on Jasek Road may have a record year for production of extended-growth walleye fingerlings.

The LCO conservation department also is working to maintain the Class A trout streams on the reservation, Tyrolt said.

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