



State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Jim Doyle, Governor
Scott Hassett, Secretary

101 S. Webster St.
Box 7921
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921
Telephone 608-266-2621
FAX 608-267-3579
TTY Access via relay - 711

June 1, 2007

Dear Interested Citizens/Stakeholder Groups:

Subject: Rest Lake Dam

Secretary Scott Hassett has asked that I update all of the citizens who have inquired about the Manitowish Chain of Lakes and the Rest Lake Dam. The Secretary and our Water Division Administrator, Todd Ambs, are keenly interested in the project and will be following the progress toward resolving the concerns that citizens have raised.

On November 27, 2006, the Department of Natural Resources (Department) held a meeting with stakeholder groups in an attempt to reach a compromise between competing interests related to operation of the Rest Lake Dam in Manitowish Waters. A proposal was drafted based on input received from several stakeholders and sent out for review. During the negotiation process we heard from many of you about the social, economic, and environmental impacts of changing the operation of the dam. We also heard diverging view points from both up-stream and down-stream user groups about how the dam should be operated. We were not able to reach a compromise that all the stakeholders could agree to. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of our next steps in the process.

We intend to pursue issuing a new order to Excel Energy for operation of levels and flows at the Rest Lake Dam. This action requires the Department to follow the environmental analysis process outlined under the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA). WEPA requires the DNR to gather relevant environmental information, evaluate a range of feasible alternatives, and identify anticipated impacts on the human environment. An important part of this process is to gather public input on issues that will need to be considered in the environmental document. We recognize the controversial nature of this issue and will make sure that ample time is allowed for public comment and review during the summer months. We will begin the WEPA process this summer and will notify you of the date and time of our initial public input meeting. The information collected at this meeting will help guide the issues to be analyzed in the WEPA process.

Once we have gathered public input on the issues, staff will begin drafting the WEPA document over the course of the winter months. This document will likely be available for public review early in the summer of 2008. The Department will not make a decision or issue a revised operating order until the entire WEPA process is complete. Enclosed for your reference is our guide on the role of WEPA in our decision-making to help you prepare to participate in this process.

In the meantime, if you have questions about the WEPA process, you may contact Jon Simonsen at 715/365-8916. If you have questions related to the current or past operation of the dam, you may contact Tom Bashaw at 715-365-8973. Both are located at our DNR Rhinelander Service Center, 107 Sutliff Ave., Rhinelander, WI 54501. Thank you for expressing your interest in this project.

Sincerely

John Gozdzialski
Regional Director