

Dam Meeting - 7/14/05

The Lakes Association is opposed at this time to any change in the drawdown - as a test, or otherwise, because up to now, the DNR has failed to give equal attention to several other important issues, including:

The confirmed presence of spawning salmon in at least one area of the River below the dam (Vance Lake).

The absence of empirical evidence that flow rate is the sole reason for lack of sturgeon reproduction.

The expectations of riparian homeowners and prospective buyers' after 65 years of consistent yearly dam operation.

The DNR's actions have given the impression that there is a predetermined plan to convince us that a change in flow rate is the only way to achieve your mandate. Predation, stream reconfiguration and alternative scenarios deserve the same kind of attention you have given to flow rates.

Referring to predation - The DNR has used the fact that redhorse coexist with sturgeon in the Wolf River and therefore can't be the reason for lack of recruitment in the Manitowish. Considering the number of sturgeon spawning in the Wolf vs. those in the Manitowish, isn't that comparison invalid? Is there any evidence that fungus, creek chubs, shiners and the like, might be predators of sturgeon eggs? Give us more than a two-line answer as a reason not to consider these and other predation possibilities.

Referring to stream reconfiguration - a principal reason, stated in one of our meetings, for not considering stream modification to create greater depth and flow -- and new, rocky spawning areas -- was that because of the nature of the sandy streambed, the new areas would likely fill in. Of course, the same could be said of your proposed increased flow over existing spawning beds. A certain amount of this is desirable because as Jeff Scheirer said a year ago March, "Periodic high river flows are needed to re-suspend and distribute sediment and scour river channels." And after all, this is what has happened, during drawdown, every Fall for the last 65 years. Stream modification has been effective elsewhere. Why not here?

Referring to alternative scenarios - one alternative would be releasing fingerlings, raised from Upper Flambeau eggs, in the Manitowish River above Island Lake. Jim Kreitlow has said there are some good spawning areas there. The Lake Sturgeon Management Plan is non-specific as to location, i.e. "The Upper Flambeau - Manitowish River System". Fish returning to those spawning beds some Spring would have the full benefit of Spring rains and good water flow without the necessity of tortured, artificial enhancement, a significant hit on the Township's economy and extreme unhappiness (not to say, anger) among an overwhelming majority of our riparian owners.

Ironically, the DNR has used the consistency of dam operation over 65 years as a reason to propose changes. That's a little like being penalized for just standing here.

You have spent an enormous amount of time and resources travelling down a pretty narrow road. I would hope you could give us some alternatives to "Public interest flow regimes".