

Evaluating the Operating Order for the Rest Lake Dam WEPA Process FAQ

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#1: Why has the Department made the decision to pursue issuing a new operating order for the Rest Lake Dam?

- Over the last four years, the DNR has been working with local lake associations, river groups, and representatives from a number of other area stakeholders (Turtle Flambeau flowage, the Town of Manitowish Waters, Xcel Energy, and the La du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians) to discuss the operation of Rest Lake Dam. A number of resource and socioeconomic issues affected by current dam operations were identified as part of these discussions. During this time, DNR staff also collected field data on existing resources in the lake chain and in the river below the dam. A summary of these efforts can be found at:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/gmu/upwis/restlakedam/workgroup.htm>

- Based on the information collected, the DNR believes that the operating order of the Rest Lake dam needs to be updated to protect public rights to water quality and quantity and recreational activities upstream and downstream of the dam. The agency also needs to address the need to promote safety and protect life, health and property.

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#2: What is the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act?

- Before the DNR can make a decision on a new operating order for the dam, the environmental analysis process outlined under the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA) needs to be completed. WEPA provides an informational process that ensures broad citizen participation and a complete analysis for those who must make any subsequent permitting decisions. This process requires the DNR to gather relevant environmental information, evaluate a range of feasible alternatives, and identify anticipated impacts.

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#2: What is the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act? (Continued)

- The public input meeting that was held on August 25th was one step to help the DNR understand the relevant issues and concerns from the public's perspective. DNR staff are currently reviewing the comments that were recorded at the meeting as well as written comments that have been submitted. A copy of the comments recorded at the input meeting are posted on the Rest Lake website at:
http://dnr.wi.gov/org/gmu/upwis/restlakedam/Rest_Lake_comments.pdf
- Department staff will begin drafting the environmental analysis document over the winter months. There will be additional opportunities next year for public review of the environmental analysis prior to completion of the WEPA process. We will provide updates on those review opportunities on the Rest Lake website and through the local media. We will make sure that public input opportunities are scheduled during the summer months.

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#3: Where can I get more information?

- For more information on the WEPA process please visit the following websites:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/es/science/eis/wepa.pdf>
<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/nr/nr150.pdf>
- For more information on the current operation of the Rest Lake Dam go to the following websites: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/gmu/upwis/restlakedam/damoperations.htm>
- If you have questions about the WEPA process, or would like to submit comments and issues that should be considered in the environmental analysis of the operation of the dam, please contact Jon Simonsen at:

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