CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

State of Wisconsin

DATE: October 12, 2005

TO: Rest Lake Dam/Manitowish River Work Group

FROM: Jim Kreitlow

SUBJECT: Minutes of October 4, 2005 meeting

Selected work group members (representing their associations), Xcel Energy, the Town of Manitowish Waters and DNR met on October 4, 2005. Jim Kreitlow called the meeting for the purpose of continuing discussions in hope of moving forward.

Discussion centered on the following issues:
1. Adaptive Management Strategy/What is the intent?
2. Continue to discuss options for operational change.
3. Can we all agree on an option to try?
4. User group concerns.

I want to thank those who participated. I believe we made some significant progress.

Participants
1. Jim Kreitlow, WDNR, 107 Sutliff Avenue, Rhinelander, WI. 54501, Kreitj@dnr.state.wi.us 365-8947.
2. Bob Martini, WDNR, 107 Sutliff Avenue, Rhinelander WI. 54501 martire@dnr.state.wi.us 365-8969.
3. John Hansen, Town Chairman, 217 Spider Lake Road, Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545 Jlhmjh@centurytel.net 543-2438.
4. Helen Townsend, Friends of the Manitowish River, 73 River Access Road, Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545. Bhtownsend@yahoo.com 543-2166.
5. Rob Olson, Xcel Energy, 1414 West Hamilton Avenue, PO Box 8, Eau Claire, WI. Robert.w.olson@xcelenergy.com 839-1353.
6. Jack King, Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, PO Box 286, Manitowish Waters WI. 54545. jgrovking@yahoo.com
7. Harland Klagos, Manitowish Waters Alliance, 40 West Bay Road, Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545. Klagos@centurytel.net 543-8246.
8. Bob Brunnilson, Friends of the Manitowish River, 39 Townsend Road, Manitowish Waters, WI. 715-543-8057.
9. Les Jacobson, Friends of the Manitowish River, PO Box 202, Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545. 543-2501.
10. Greg Holt, Friends of the Manitowish River.
11. Judi Schmidt Arnold, Manitowish Waters Alliance, PO Box 98, Manitowish Waters WI. 54545. Judisa@shrealty.com 543-2300.

Adaptive Management Strategy

Jim Kreitlow provided an overview of the adaptive management strategy. Essentially what the term adaptive management means is to:

- Try, evaluate and adjust.
- Learn by doing.
- Evaluate success or failure of an action and adjust.

In more detail the adaptive management process involves 6 steps:
1. Assess (data collection/problem identification)
2. Design (development proposals for operational change)
3. Implement an agreed upon option.
4. Monitor selected indicators.
5. Evaluate for success or failure.
6. Adjust or make changes.

The department proposed to use this process and evaluate success or failure over an agreed upon time period (i.e. five years). The intent was to establish a mechanism to adjust to upstream/downstream user group concerns as we implement a chosen option. This would allow us to start small and then adjust accordingly.

Overall there was not much support for an adaptive management strategy for the following reasons:
1. There would be no end to changes.
2. Too bureaucratic.
3. How do we tweak the process? Will we have to continue to have a standing team involved?
4. It's a process that continues to ratchet down operations.
5. Open-ended.

Given the reaction of the group there are three directions the department could pursue:
1. Enforce the conditions of the existing order (At the present time the dam is not being operated to those specifications).
2. Draft an order listing the proposed option for operational change including a reduced draw down.
3. Implement an option that all parties can agree on and evaluate after a five-year period.

Options for operational change to consider

Jim Kreitlow provided the group with a hand out that summarized the options for change. Details of these had been covered at earlier meetings, power point presentations and meeting minutes. A summary of the options is provided below:

OPTIONS TO M EET FLOW GOALS?

1. Extend the fill period beyond Memorial Day (**Proposal 1**).

2. Reduce the winter draw down to provide additional storage (Help to improve late fall navigation and fish stranding issue, potentially improve musky and northern pike spawning habitat, improve chances of filling the chain by Memorial Day)(**Proposal 2**).

3. Begin filling the chain sooner before complete ice out to capture run-off that is normally passed (**Proposal 3**).

4. A combination of all 3 above.

5. Propose a 5 year trial period to fine tune.

There was very good discussion covering the options. We all agreed that it was not in the best interest of the group to end up in court over this. We also agreed that we should consider the ecology of the river as a very important consideration. There were areas that the groups could agree on including:

1. Extending the fall draw down period (prevent flooding downstream).
2. Maintaining a minimum flow of 50 cfs (this may include setting a new summer minimum elevation on the chain.
3. Targeting a spring flow goal between 75 and 150 cfs.

The major issue preventing us from moving forward was the reduced winter draw down consideration. The upstream interests groups are heavily against this because of the uncertainty of property damage and the perceived downward trend in property values. Because there is no real data to counter act these assumptions, and the fact that it is important to move forward, Jim Kreitlow suggested that for the time being, reduced winter drawdown would not be considered. The trade-off is that the upstream groups would have to accept an extended spring fill period beyond the Memorial Day target so spring flow goals can be met. It should also be a goal to capture some spring runoff for storage before the ice is 75% off of Rest Lake. The upstream interest groups were willing to consider this but would like a written proposal of operations before they commit. This also received support from downstream folks if it meant meeting spring flow goals. Xcel energy was also willing to consider this option to move forward.

User Group Concerns

Jack King was concerned that the department should investigate stream reconfiguration or introduce sturgeon above the dam before change in winter storage (in the chain) is even considered. What Jack meant by reconfiguration is adding spawning habitat in suitable reaches of the river, or deepening the existing spawning site mechanically. I agree that adding habitat is a good idea at suitable locations, but I do not agree that we should manipulate a site that has suitable habitat but lacks suitable flow. In any event you need proper water velocity and depth in both these cases anyway. Stocking fish above Rest Lake Dam is also a good idea and could be considered for the future. Our goal is to restore a self-sustaining population of sturgeon in the Manitowish River below Rest Lake Dam. All necessary habitat features except adequate flow exist for a self-sustaining sturgeon population below Rest Lake Dam.

Future direction

Jim Kreitlow will put together a detailed proposal outlining the annual operation without the reduced draw down option. It will first be shared with Xcel Energy then with the represented interest groups for review. At that time if parties can accept this option we will move forward with implementation. If an agreement can't be reached the department would probably issue an order that includes a public interest flow regime covering flows, chain elevations, seasonal operations, ramping rates, etc., necessary to achieve the public interest goals.