

DATE: November 21, 2003 FILE REF: [Click **here** and type file ref.]

TO: Rest Lake Dam/Manitowish River Work Group

FROM: Jim Kreitlow

SUBJECT: Minutes of First Meeting (November 19, 2003).

I want to thank all the group members who attended our first meeting on November 19, 2003. I apologize that the meeting was disjointed at first, but I struggled preparing the best way to conduct this meeting. In the end I believe we got back on track and overall the meeting was a good. I welcome any ideas or suggestions that would improve future meetings. I look forward to constructive discussion.

I will summarize the meeting minutes following the agenda.

#### Agenda Review

No new agenda items were added.

#### Participants

1. Jim Kreitlow, WDNR, 107 Sutliff Avenue, Rhinelander, WI. 54501, [Kreitj@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:Kreitj@dnr.state.wi.us) 365-8947.
2. Bob Martini, WDNR, 107 Sutliff Avenue, Rhinelander WI. 54501 [martire@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:martire@dnr.state.wi.us) 365-8969.
3. Jeff Scheirer, WDNR, Park Falls, WI. [Scheij@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:Scheij@dnr.state.wi.us) 762-4684 (extension 131).
4. Jeff Roth, WDNR. 5291 Statehouse Circle, Mercer, WI. [Rothj@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:Rothj@dnr.state.wi.us) 476-7847.
5. Steve Gilbert, WDNR, 8770 County Highway J, Woodruff, WI. 54568 [Gilbes@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:Gilbes@dnr.state.wi.us) 358-0229
6. John Hansen, Town Chairman, 217 Spider Lake Road, Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545 [Jlhunj@centurytel.net](mailto:Jlhunj@centurytel.net) 543-2438.
7. Les Jacobson, Friends of the Manitowish River, PO Box 202, Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545. 543-2501
8. Bob and Helen Townsend, Friends of the Manitowish River, 73 River Access Road, Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545. [Bhtownsend@yahoo.com](mailto:Bhtownsend@yahoo.com) 543-2166.
9. Rob Olson, Xcel Energy, 1414 West Hamilton Avenue, PO Box 8, Eau Claire, WI. [Robert.w.olson@xcelenergy.com](mailto:Robert.w.olson@xcelenergy.com) 839-1353.
10. Mary Sinkus, Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, PO Box 458, Manitowish Waters, WI. [Pinebarons@centurytel.net](mailto:Pinebarons@centurytel.net) 543-8464.
11. Harland Klagos, Manitowish Waters Alliance, 40 West Bay Road, Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545. [Klagos@centurytel.net](mailto:Klagos@centurytel.net) 543-8246.
12. Ronald Gaa, Manitowish Waters Alliance PO Box 9, Manitowish Waters, 54545. 543-2505 Fax 543-2188.
13. Judi Schmidt Arnold, Manitowish Waters Alliance, PO Box 98, Manitowish Waters, 54545. [Judisa@shrealty.com](mailto:Judisa@shrealty.com) 543-2300.
14. Lloyd Bonech, Manitowish Waters Alliance, [fatnbarb@yahoo.com](mailto:fatnbarb@yahoo.com) 543-2511.
15. Don Rayala, Manitowish Waters Alliance, 325 Alder Lake Road, Manitowish Waters WI. 54545. 543-2225.
16. Eleanor Butler, PO Box 157 Manitowish Waters, WI. 54545. [Enzymes@centurytel.net](mailto:Enzymes@centurytel.net)

17. Joe Stengele, 321 Point O' Pines Road Manitowish Waters WI. 54545.
18. Tom Feldkamp, [tfeldkamp@centurytel.net](mailto:tfeldkamp@centurytel.net) 543-2149 Fax 543-2150.

### **Members Absent**

1. John Bates, Friends of the Manitowish River, 4245 North Highway 47, Mercer WI. 54547 476-2828.
2. Pete Rasey, Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, 543-2176.
3. Rita Mazer, Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, 543-2538.
4. Mona Weichmann, Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, 543-2562.
5. Jack King, Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, PO Box 286, Manitowish Waters WI. 54545.  
[Jgroveking@aol.com](mailto:Jgroveking@aol.com)
6. Jean Rein [jarein@centurytel.net](mailto:jarein@centurytel.net)

### **Purpose of Work Group Formation**

#### **Background**

Jim Kreitlow addressed the 3 interest groups earlier this spring and summer. Jim presented a Power Point slide show covering dam operation and resource issues at those meetings. A white summary paper was also provided. As a result of those meetings it was suggested that a work group be formed to work with DNR. Selected members of each interest group, DNR, Xcel Energy and the Town of Manitowish Waters, would represent the work group.

#### **Representation**

The Work Group is represented by the following agencies/organizations:

1. Manitowish Waters Alliance, LTD.
2. Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, Inc.
3. Friends of the Manitowish River.
4. DNR.
5. Xcel Energy.
6. Town of Manitowish Waters
7. Turtle Flambeau-Trude Lake Property Owners Association (Will be invited to future meetings).

#### **Role of Work Group Members**

- DNR's role is to listen and provide background information and propose operational changes.
- Xcel wants to be involved in process to evaluate alternatives and develop solutions that are workable.
- User groups role is to express your groups concerns, ask for clarification of information or request presentations on selected topics, and keep your groups informed, help develop workable solutions.
- It was agreed that initial meetings focus would be to educate until a comfort level is reached. After that DNR would forward some options to consider.

#### **Ground Rules**

Ground rules were discussed. It was agreed that everyone would be treated with respect and there will be no personnel attacks. All opinions are legitimate.

### **Work Group Charge (Goal)**

Come to agreement on future operation of the Rest Lake Dam. Do we maintain the status quo or do we consider some changes? Can we balance upstream and downstream concerns? Can we change dam operation to some mode we can all agree to?

## **Brief Overview of Issues/Operation**

Jim Kreitlow provided a handout prepared by Rob Olson of Xcel Energy that provides a good summary of the existing dam operation. Jim then gave an overview of flow/habitat relationships and influence of historical reservoir operation. Some of the key issues or future decision items are:

1. Can we consider increasing river flows in May when the chain is normally filling to improve flows for sturgeon and other fish species?
2. Can we extend the reservoir or Manitowish chain fill period (behond Memorial Day) longer to accomplish the above?
3. What is the public interest flow in the Manitowish River? Is the 50-cfs minimum flow adequate to protect fish and wildlife and recreational canoeing?
4. Can we consider starting the drawdown sooner (September 1<sup>st</sup> instead of October 1<sup>st</sup>) to reduce downstream flow fluctuation and flooding?
5. Can we consider a reduced winter drawdown in the chain to provide more storage to augment spring flows? What impact would this have on existing structures (docks and retaining walls)?
6. Can we begin filling the chain earlier before the ice is  $\frac{3}{4}$  off of Rest Lake so we can capture early spring runoff?

It was also noted that other considerations might have to be evaluated. Bob Martini mentioned that there is no “silver bullet” and a wide array of alternatives needs to be considered. Some of these could include evaluating fish passage at Turtle Flambeau Dam, stocking options or instream channel re-configuration (to allow fish movement).

Another concern brought up is that DNR needs to consider all the other factors that may be affecting the sturgeon (age structure, predation, and water quality) population before operational changes are implemented.

## **Future Work/Studies**

A brief discussion took place concerning future work/studies that needs to be considered. These include:

1. Evaluate all factors that could be affecting sturgeon.
2. Continue to evaluate selected downstream river flows.
3. What impact would a reduced drawdown have on structures (docks, retaining walls)?
4. What impact would operational changes have on the Manitowish Chain fishery (i.e. walleye)?
5. How valuable are the downstream river backwater areas for fish and wildlife?
6. Continue to evaluate water quality (temperature, dissolved oxygen).

## **Questions/Discussion**

A question was raised about why DNR was pursuing the issue of dam operation? Our work was prompted by:

1. Concerns from the public.
2. The need to protect and restore sturgeon as outlined in our statewide Sturgeon Management Plan.
3. The need to look at operations because of the length of time. The dam has been operated the same since 1939.

We then compiled goals or major concerns from each group.

### River Group

1. Looking for a reasonable drawdown in the chain (e.g. Eagle River/Minocgua Chain (no damage to docks).
2. Want sufficient instream flows for fish and wildlife.
3. Concerned about fish stranding above and below the dam.
4. Ecosystem perspective for instream flows.
5. Concerned over fall drawdown date.
6. Concern over flooding of loon nests.

### Manitowish Waters Alliance

1. Property values/economics of town.
2. Fish concerns in chain of lakes.
3. Damage to boathouses, retaining walls and piers.
4. Concern about future dam removal.

### Manitowish Waters Lakes Association

1. Insufficient empirical data to make decisions.
2. Support ecosystem approach.
3. Prefer process of elimination to isolate cause of poor sturgeon reproduction/recruitment.
4. Present information to the work group as it is obtained (briefings on DNR activities/studies).
5. Consider benefits of moderated drawdowns in increments (inches).
6. Public education is needed.

### Xcel Energy (Chippewa Flambeau Improvement Company (CFIC))

1. Want to maintain operational value. At the present time there is only marginal economic benefit (only benefit is to augment flows to the Turtle Flambeau Flowage). CFIC would still be willing to sell or give dam to another owner.
2. Stay involved in the process to evaluate operational alternatives and develop solutions that are workable.

### **Status of Department Work**

Jim Kreitlow gave a Power Point presentation covering department activities. He covered:

1. Summary or yearly flow operations at rest Lake Dam (1994, 1997 and 2002).
2. Brief summary of water quality data collected by the Sonde data recorders.
3. Photos of habitat monitoring sites at different flows.
4. Air photos of the river under different flows

### **Agenda Items for Next Meeting (Tentative)**

1. Presentation by Jeff Roth on Sturgeon.
2. Presentation by Rob Olson covering dam operation.
3. Presentation by Steve Jaeger covering the evaluation of 10 years of flow data on the Manitowish River.

### **Next Meeting**

Some time in January.