



**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Northeast Region**
2984 Shawano Avenue, Green Bay, WI 54313
Phone: (920) 662-5100; Fax 920-662-5159
dnr.wi.gov

Buffalo Lake Dam, “Dredge Bank”, Reconstruction Project Status July 10, 2012

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources held an informational meeting on June 30, 2012 to provide a project update to attendees. While more than 100 people attended, we know that many more residents have an interest in the project and will want to be aware of the future of the project. The following summary highlights the key items that were discussed.

Project Schedule

Mead & Hunt entered into a contract with the Department of Administration in June to provide consulting services (design, bidding, & oversight) for the Montello Dam Reconstruction Project. It is currently developing a review set of design drawings for submittal in September 2012. Another informational meeting will be held in early fall so Mead & Hunt can present its design to interested citizens. Please watch the local papers and the Lake District, City, or County websites for the meeting notification. Following the fall informational meeting and submittal of DNR’s review comments, Mead & Hunt will finalize the plans and specifications and bid the project in February/March 2013. The intended start of construction is May 2013 with substantial completion and project close-out by the end of 2014.

Project Components

The project will include installation of a slurry cutoff wall along the entire length of the embankment. The embankment will also be reshaped to widen the base and flatten the upstream and downstream slopes. The gates on the lock will be replaced, a fish passage will be installed, and the concrete spillway will be reconstructed. The new spillway will have exact dimensions and flow characteristics to the existing spillway and will not change operation or water levels from the current condition. Existing public use facilities will be replaced and additional facilities will be installed. Facilities include the boat landing, fishing wharfs, piers, trail, lighting, and informational kiosk.

Lake Drawdown

To facilitate reconstruction of the Montello Dam, Buffalo Lake will need to be drawn down. To minimize the potential for construction delays, the DNR will begin the drawdown on September 11, 2012 by lowering the Lake by as much as three inches per day. The lake will remain in a drawn down condition through the winter, the summer of 2013, and the winter of 2013/2014. Water dependent construction is expected to be completed in early 2014 and the lake will be refilled in May 2014 with the expectation that the lake will be full for the summer boating season. Benefits of the drawdown will be discussed by DNR staff at the August 18, 2012 Buffalo Lake District Annual Meeting. However, an information and summary document of past drawdowns may be found on the Lake District Website.

Important Dates

August 18, 2012 – Public Information Meeting about the Environmental Assessment, Manual Code Approval (Permitting), and Project Status Update to be held after the Lake District Annual Meeting (10:30 AM)

September 11, 2012 – Buffalo Lake drawdown scheduled to begin

Late September/Early October - Public meeting about the proposed final project design

Contacts

Brent Binder – DNR Agency Contact, (608) 444-3196
Jeff Klamik – Project Manager, Dept. of Administration (608) 267-0423
Jim Tomasko – DNR Property Manager, (920) 787-3043
Ted Johnson – DNR Water Resources (Drawdown), (920) 787-3048
Will Stites – DNR Water Management Specialist, (715) 421-7815
Dave Bartz – DNR Fisheries, (920) 787-3016
Steve Miller – DNR Bureau Director, (608) 266-5782

Drawdown Information for Waterfront Landowners

Buffalo Lake is expected to be drawn down for about a year and a half starting in the fall of 2012. The drawdown can produce some safety issues, and also questions about what activities are legal on the exposed lakebed.

Safety first, if you walk on the exposed lakebed, be careful. There may be deep, mucky areas where a person could sink in and become stuck.

As for activities on the lakebed, the same DNR rules apply to lake beds whether the water is there or not.

No motorized vehicles may be operated on the lakebed. This includes everything from a dirt-bike to a bulldozer or excavator.

Any structure that would require a DNR permit when the lake is full also requires a permit when the lake is drawn down. This may include riprap or other shore protection structures, fish habitat structures, or any structure or deposit placed on the bed. Contact your local DNR Water Management Specialist for details.

Without a permit, you can remove:

- Up to 100 square feet of bottom material, up to 1 ft deep, with hand tools
- Bottom material as needed to maintain a structure that is exempt from permits (contact your local DNR Water Management Specialist for details).

Any other disturbance of bottom material, such as tilling, requires a permit.

The rules for removing vegetation are the same during a drawdown as any other time. You can remove plants by hand in a corridor 30 feet wide. Non-rooted plants or debris can be removed with hand tools along your entire shoreline. Plants growing on the exposed bed can be mowed, but rototillers may not be used. No chemicals can be used for plant control on exposed lakebed without a permit from Ted Johnson of the DNR.

One thing that's different during a drawdown concerns trespassing. Unlike a natural lakebed, the bed of a water body created by a dam usually has a private owner. That might not be the owner of the adjacent upland. The owner's permission is needed to walk on the exposed bed of a drawn-down impoundment.