

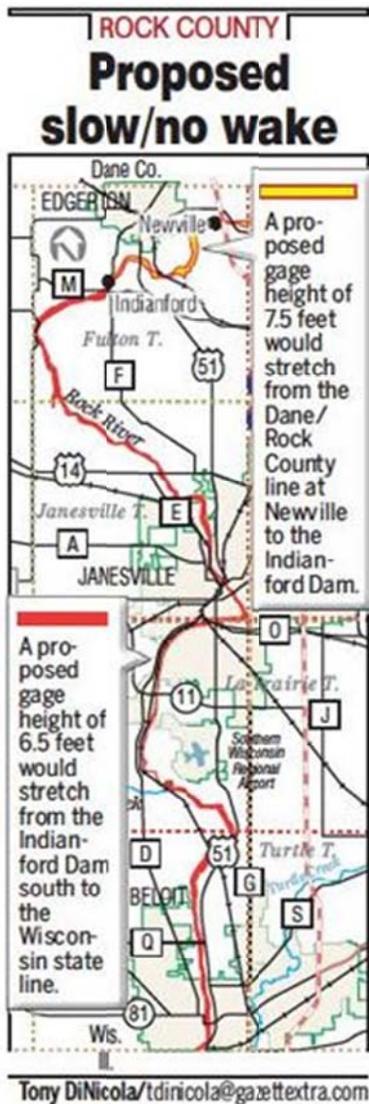
Photo



Photo by [Bill Olmsted](#)

The Indianford Dam on the Rock River helps control water depths in Lake Koshkonong.

Photo



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Photo by Tony DiNicola

Rock County - Proposed slow/no wake

JANESVILLE — The Rock County Board will consider an ordinance that would set a countywide standard on water levels for slow/no-wake along the Rock River.

The board's public safety and justice committee on Monday forwarded an ordinance to the full county board that would set slow/no-wake at a gauge height of 7½ feet for parts of the Rock River north of the Indianford dam, and at a gauge height of 6½ feet for parts south of the dam.

Measurements would come from two United States Geological Survey gauges on the river at Newville and Afton.

It's not clear when the board could take up the committee's recommendation, but the board would have to hold a public hearing on the ordinance before approving it.

The committee's recommendation came after about 40 residents spoke at a meeting Sept. 19, during which the committee discussed new slow/no-wake standards.

Most who spoke were residents opposed to a petition by the Rock-Koshkonong Lake District asking the county to raise slow/no-wake standards on the river to a uniform gauge height of 9 feet.

The county was considering the lake district request, but residents at last month's meeting argued that raising the height to 9 feet would lead to high-water boat traffic—causing shoreline erosion and damage to piers and seawalls.

The residents, many of whom live along the river north of the Indianford dam, urged the committee to set the standard at 7 1/2 feet, at least in the north part of the county.

Committee Chairman Ivan Collins said the committee took the residents' concerns to heart.

"They're property owners on the river itself. They felt that damage would be done to their property," he said. "If we put in some kind of an ordinance and their property is damaged, what have we done to them?"

Collins said some committee members took boat rides last week to survey low-lying areas along the river, particularly in the north part of the county.

"We got a better idea of the lay of the land," he said. "There are several residents there you can see where damage would occur to their property."

Rock County townships and municipalities now request slow/no-wake orders and the Rock County Sheriff's Office enforces them.

In the north end of the county, some townships—including the town of Fulton—have their own ordinances that set slow/no-wake at 7½ feet. For them, the committee's Monday recommendation would extend the status quo.

But the status quo is a problem for the Rock-Koshkonong Lake District, which overlaps the town of Fulton geographically.

Lake district officials say studies show the townships' standard of 7 1/2 feet has put the river under slow/no-wake orders for about a third of each boating season for the last eight years.

Also, a standard of 7 1/2 feet would make it difficult for the lake district to use the Indianford dam to raise water levels at Lake Koshkonong—a plan by the district that for years has been locked in a court battle against the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Under that plan, the district during low-water periods would use the dam to raise lake levels 7.2 inches above DNR limits to a gauge height of 7 feet. But if the county set a slow/no-wake standard at 7 1/2 feet, it would give the district just a six-inch buffer whenever it used the dam to raise lake levels.

"Mother Nature rains on us six inches, and you're limiting boat navigation at that point," said lake district Chairman Brian Christianson.