

Thursday, July 30, 2009

Grant to fund study of dredging Koshkonong

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The Rock-Koshkonong Lake District has received funding to study the possible dredging of Lake Koshkonong.

The lake's summer level has been a concern by residents and boaters for many years. The idea of dredging the lake was first discussed at the lake district's 2006 annual RKLD meeting during a discussion of possibly raising the lake level in summer. When the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources would not allow boosting the water level by adjusting the Indianford dam gates, the district began exploring dredging options with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The corps' federal grant program, Planning Assistance to the States (PAS), provides assistance to conduct preliminary engineering required to determine the viability of dredging and island formation.

The PAS grant for the study was for \$100,000, but that needed to be matched locally for it to be awarded to the local organization.

Lake district Chairman Brian Christianson said that state Rep. Andy Jorgensen, D-Fort Atkinson, and state Assembly Speaker Mike Sheridan supported matching the grant, and the funds were approved in the recently passed state biennium budget.

Jorgensen said on Wednesday that this study is exactly what Lake Koshkonong has needed for a long time.

"This \$100,000 one-time money is to leverage the funds through the Army Corps of Engineers to do a comprehensive study of options and structures to preserve wetlands, shorelines, fish and wildlife habitats,

as well as navigability of Lake Koshkonong," Jorgensen said. "As I understand the process, Brian Christianson has already been exploring those options with the Army Corps of Engineers to get started. Some improvements and preservation procedures have been done in the past, but they have been Band-aids for the larger sediment issue."

The Assemblyman said that the money will provide the comprehensive plan and allow residents to look at the costs associated with the next step in the process.

"So in many ways, this is the first step in the process of dredging the lake and taking care of the problem the way it should be taken care of, instead of just throwing Band-aids at it," Jorgensen said. "This is doing it right, and doing right the first time."

Jorgensen said he has heard from several constituents concerned about the need for dredging the lake, which is located in Jefferson, Rock and Dane counties.

"They tell the story about when they were little boys and girls and they heard their dads and moms and grandparents talking about how the lake needed to be dredged a long, long time ago," he added. "And here we are in 2009 and it is actually going to get done."

Jorgensen said that getting the money for the study during the state budget process was not easy.

"It is always controversial any time when you are talking about dollars and cents, there are going to be questions that have to be answered," he said.

"But I was proud to do so because Lake Koshkonong provides so many tourism dollars, not just for Jefferson County, but for Rock County and beyond. It made sense that this lake get the attention it deserves and needs at this time."

"We can keep throwing money at it as we have in the past, or you can say this is what we need and get it right the first time," Jorgensen added. "Instead of a Band-aid for this problem, Lake Koshkonong is

going to go in for surgery, and it will get done right."

Christianson could not be reached prior to deadline for comment on this story.

The lake district's annual meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Saturday at Fort Atkinson High School.