

[Subscribe](#) [Contact Us](#) [Submission Forms](#)

Welcome to the site!
Login or Signup below.

.....

[Login](#) | [Signup](#)

39°
Overcast



[Home](#) [News](#) [Sports](#) [Opinion](#) [Community](#) [Classifieds](#) [Weather](#) [Multimedia](#) [Our Publications](#) [Library](#)

[Home](#) [Milton Courier](#) [News](#) [Local](#)

Indianford Dam OK'd by DNR

[Story](#) [Comments](#) [Image \(3\)](#)

[Print](#) [Font Size:](#)

[Recommend 26](#) [Tweet](#) [G+](#)

[Share](#)

[Previous](#) [Next](#)



Kim McDarison photo

Generator pit

While a generator used to create electricity once filled this pit, today, only the cap at the bottom and the wicket gate beneath are left and included as part of the Indianford Dam system used to impound and release water. DNR staff recently removed the caps and inspected the two wicket gates, declaring them fully functional.



[Buy this photo](#)

Wellenkotter was mistaken when he claimed that Lake Koshkonong and Rock River water levels were being impacted by trash gathering on the racks used to protect the wicket gates. The gates are housed within a now defunct powerhouse located on the west side of the river. Both the racks and gates are submerged, making it hard to make an immediate inspection, Wellenkotter noted during the annual meeting, held July 29. He claimed to have shared with DNR officials photographs he had taken showing large debris floating in the river and engaging the racks. The photos served as evidence, he said, that the gates had likely not been cleaned for as many as 16 days.

Down by the river

Posted: Thursday, October 19, 2017 12:51 pm | Updated: 4:02 pm, Fri Oct 20, 2017.

By Kim McDarison Correspondent | **0 comments**

As autumn air cools in the Lake Koshkonong region, spirited discussions heat up between residents living in and around water impounded by the Indianford Dam and those charged with its repair and maintenance, bringing an abundance of local color.

It began with an exchange between Rock-Koshkonong Lake District (RKLD) Chairman Brian Christianson and a district taxpayer George Wellenkotter about wicket gate debris rack cleaning and maintenance. The exchange took place during the district's most recent annual meeting, then was followed by a Department of Natural Resources inspection and an RKLD press release penned by Christianson. Discussion about the dam, its future, possible solutions and the money that could be used to pay for them was renewed.

Fueled by frustration, colloquialisms, such as "bogus," "made that up," and stronger expletives, have been used on both sides of the debate to describe assertions made by those offering the opposing view.

Persistent claims

As presented in his press release, dated Oct. 9, for Christianson, the DNR inspection made on Oct. 5 served as proof, he wrote, that RKLD district taxpayer and longtime Edgerton area resident George

The BIGGER the bank,
the smaller the customer.

Try a better Bank.

www.fcsmilton.com

Calendar

October 2017						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				
today's events		browse		submit		

In response to Wellenkotter's assertions, Christianson arranged a meeting for the following day, July 30, at the dam. At that time, Wellenkotter, aided by his son, Todd, worked to find and extract debris from the submerged racks. Using a submersible Go-Pro camera attached to a 12-foot pole and a tool provided by the lake district, which Wellenkotter would later describe as "a snow shovel with three holes to allow water to pass through," he was able to locate and remove several tree limbs from the racks.

During the exercise, Christianson agreed that debris collects on the racks, and is therefore removed by a district employee, but the amount that gathers is not enough to prevent the gates from functioning properly. The racks, he said, are designed to do just that: collect debris that floats downstream, keeping it from entering and damaging the wicket gates.

High water on the river, Christianson said, was caused by an unusual amount of annual rainfall, and even with the gates fully functioning, the unusual amount of water was simply overwhelming the dam's ability to discharge water more quickly.

Fully functional

On Oct. 5, DNR Water Regulations and Zoning Engineer Rob Davis said the agency inspected the gates as it routinely does when the DNR winter operating order, governing the depth of impounded waters by the Indianford dam, goes into effect.

Davis confirmed the inspection included looking into the turbine pits to make sure that the gates were opening and closing correctly, and water was moving through them properly.

"We verified that they were fully functional," he said.

Describing inspections as a "snapshot in time," he said: "Our overarching purpose is to ensure the gates are fully functional. As far as racks, they appeared to be clear on that date. We could see that the gates were visually pulling in water and there was turbulence on the downstream side. We could see that the water was moving through."

About photographs sent by Wellenkotter, he said: "When he sends pictures, I contact the district and ask them if the racks have been cleaned and ask them to confirm that. It's impossible to say that the trash racks were not cleared for 16 days unless you are sitting there. The district has contracted someone to clean the racks. I've spoken with him and he told me that they had been cleaned."

Public enemy No. 1

Said Wellenkotter: "They (DNR) were down there and they took the covers off of the two wicket gates and got to see if there was any damage or debris, which there wasn't, which is good news. My concern is with the trash racks in front; if they are plugged by whatever percent, the percentage that they are plugged is whatever percentage of water won't get through.

"Brian feels I'm public enemy number one, which I'm not trying to be. My issue is, when we get rain, we should be able to get rid of it as fast as we can, with the gates 100 percent open and clean."

Wellenkotter explained that each of the two wicket gates within the powerhouse has a pressure gauge.

"In July, when we looked at the gates, we looked at the pressure gauges and the one in the back of the powerhouse building had 6 pounds of pressure, but the other one would go from 0 to 3, and then drop back down again. We call that cavitating, which means the pumps are sucking air and not water. I think the trash racks have a lot to do with that," he said.

Wellenkotter agreed that the area had received abundant rainfall, "but we've had other years with lots of rain," he said, adding: "I will agree that the dam has little effect with high water, but if it's plugged, it creates higher water quicker."

Wellenkotter advocates wicket gate replacement with slide gates similar to those used on the dam's east side. He pointed to dollars held in a segregated fund, which, he said, he thinks could be used for a project like this. Further, he said, the DNR has pointed to matching-funds grant money offered through the state which he believes could further help support the initiative.

"People have said they could be replaced for \$150,000. Why not put it out to bid? If it comes in too high then you don't do it," he said.

"I'm 66, I've lived in the area all of my life. I know how much water should be going through there. When it takes



Milton Courier

4,183 likes

Liked
Sign Up

You and 18 other friends like this



two hours and 20 minutes to get to Indianford (by boat) then nobody is going to make that trip.

"I'm not against high water, but having the water high on the lake helps those businesses, but hurts the ones downriver at Indianford. That's not fair to everybody on the river," Wellenkotter said.

Matching funds grant

In July, during the annual meeting, Davis said, there was discussion about replacing the wicket gates and potential avenues of funding. When put to a vote, the RKLD electorate voted against a \$20 increase to their individual property tax bills to an existing maintenance fee, with that money used to help cover the cost of a dam improvement project.

During the meeting, Christianson shared a \$300,000 figure as an estimated cost to replace the gates, and members discussed the potential of, with guidance from DNR, securing a state-offered matching funds grant. Members of the electorate suggested the use of a segregated fund achieved through monies collected from Rock and Jefferson counties over the course of 11 years as part of the transfer process when RKLD assumed ownership of the dam. Christianson noted that the money was meant for use during "catastrophic events," citing it as more of an insurance policy than a capital improvement fund.

Said Davis: "We asked them (RKLD) to consider removing the wicket gates and putting in slide gates. The main reason for that would be transparency. They would be visible outside on the front of the powerhouse and you could remove some if not all of the trash racks.

"We had a discussion with the district about alternative plans. They have chosen to keep this one," Davis said, noting that the DNR does not have the authority to require the district to make changes.

"The powerhouse can do the work it needs to do, but I'd still be supportive of a project that would reduce maintenance of any dam, especially if there would be significantly less cleaning, and not just specific to the Indianford Dam. Anything that reduces effort and time, I'm always going to be supportive," Davis said. He added issues of safety as another reason to entertain replacing the gates.

How about that segregated fund?

Two county officials: Rock County Board Chairman Russ Podzilni and Rock County Board Supervisor and RKLD appointee Al Sweeney, along with one attorney familiar with the segregated fund, its formation, and the Indianford transfer deed say they believe using the fund's current total with interest (\$681,517) for the purpose of replacing the wicket gates with slide gates would be allowed.

Before the deed was transferred, Podzilni said, Rock and Jefferson counties were supplying money for dam upkeep. The deed transfer stipulated that Jefferson County would continue to make an annual payment to Rock County, and Rock County would add its portion of the annual payment and remit the full amount paid by both counties to the district. The payment was divided such that Rock County taxpayers were responsible for 40 percent and Jefferson County taxpayers were responsible for 10 percent, the deed states. A one-time payment of \$100,000 was paid by the two counties at the time of the transfer closing, after which, over the course of the following 10 years, a \$50,000 payment was made annually, representing a total sum of \$600,000 paid to the RKLD over the course of 11 years, between 2003 and 2014, the deed states.

Podzilni said he believed the money could be used, if the electors choose, for the purpose of gate replacement.

Al Sweeney agreed, saying: "I don't see anything, even between the lines, that says the money has to be used for catastrophic events."

His cousin, area attorney Buck Sweeney, also agreed, saying: "I was on the board when they made that arrangement. It was a sinking fund made in case repairs needed to be made to the dam. If that happened, that money would be available and you didn't have to charge the taxpayers."

Recommend 26

Tweet



Share

Discuss

Print

Posted in Local on Thursday, October 19, 2017 12:51 pm. Updated: 4:02 pm.