

Newsletter for the Planning Assistance to States Lake Koshkonong Project

July 6 2011



The Rock Koshkonong Lake District, the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) and US Army Corps of Engineers have been working together to develop projects that would address the problems of navigational access, declines in sport fish populations, wetlands and aquatic vegetation. The challenges you are facing are similar to other lake residents throughout the state. From an economic standpoint, the solutions to these problems are not trivial.

Finding creative, long-term improvements to the lake when many of the problems reside in the watershed brings a host of emotions to local residents of the lake, as well as to others who use the lake for recreational and commercial purposes. The planning effort that you have been a part of and have observed this last year brought together local experts, state and Federal agencies to apply their knowledge to answer your questions and look for solutions.

As you are well aware, sediment and excess nutrients that drain to the Lake from the Rock River and other tributaries are a large obstacle to overcome on the Lake. The sediment influx to the Lake continues to reduce the already-shallow water depths that are a frustration and safety hazard to many of the Lake users. Excess nutrients combined with low water clarity contribute to loss of aquatic vegetation and excessive carp populations. Without aquatic vegetation, fish spawning and rearing habitats are lost and shoreline erosion is exacerbated. The Environmental Assessment we will be asking you to review proposes projects that are in locations within the District's boundaries, improve navigation in populated areas along the Lake, mitigate poor water quality, and traps sediment while improving the natural habitat. Because the focus in this joint effort

between RKLD, WDNR, and the Corps is on projects that the District could implement without watershed-wide stakeholder groups, no watershed projects were proposed; however, residents are still encouraged to participate in these watershed issues. Future RKLD newsletters will attempt to outline known watershed issues and potential "action items" for those ready and able to take that step.

The proposed improvement to navigational access on a lake as large as Lake Koshkonong poses several challenges. Dredging the entire lake would be extremely cost prohibitive, while dredging strategic areas along the shoreline leaves much of the sediment that is in the lake available to shift with a change in wind direction and possibly fill in those dredged areas.

Currently planning for a small-scale dredging project at the North Shore boat ramp is progressing to attempt to gain a better understanding of the long-term viability of strategically placed dredging projects.



Similar to attempting lake-wide improvements to navigation, attempting lake-wide improvements in aquatic habitat will be costly. However, areas like Mud Lake, whose habitat is quite exceptional, give us hope that nature can resist some of man's impacts to the environment. Some proposed projects create areas similar to Mud Lake and would improve water quality and habitat. Many proposed projects would protect the shoreline and have the potential to allow

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the shoreline to naturally rebuild itself. Using dredge spoils from the North Shore boat ramp project and constructing a breakwater to protect these spoils is part of the same-scale dredge project.

Additional projects that are proposed in the Environmental Assessment include:

- Large-scale dredging (navigation)
- Islands (navigation, habitat)
- Breakwaters or reefs (navigation and habitat)
- Trapping and consolidating sediment (nav/hab)
- Sediment and carp exclusion barriers (nav/hab)
- Establishing small communities of aquatic habitat (habitat, water quality)

In addition to the development of a wide range of potential projects, this joint effort between RKLD, WDNR, and the Corps is developing a Programmatic Environmental Assessment that will become the basis for permitting of specific projects from the Wisconsin DNR and other state and Federal agencies. We are dedicated to gathering useful and accurate information prior to implementing any larger scale project.

Another goal of this joint effort was to develop Shoreline protection measures without a cumbersome or intimidating permit process. Although shoreline projects are the responsibility of individual landowners, DNR is currently partnering with RKLD, local consultants and contractors to develop some choices for landowners to pursue that will protect shorelines while still meeting DNR's responsibility to protect public waters and wetlands. The intent is to create "template" designs previously reviewed by DNR that landowners can choose from, therefore making the permitting process much faster and easier.

Accomplishments

One of the most important aspects of planning is public involvement. Three public scoping meetings/workshops were held by the Planning Team.

- May 13, 2010
- July 18, 2010
- September 18, 2010

Many different types of analysis were conducted in order to study the effects on people and the environment if various lake management options are brought to fruition. Some studies have been conducted in the past and conducting them again may seem duplicative; however, they are necessary to give decision makers a snapshot of conditions at a particular point in time to be used in comparisons and to extrapolate future conditions.

Below is a partial list of analyses that have been conducted as a part of the Planning Assistance to States:

Lake Bathymetry Study and Mapping – helps to track changes occurring over time and provides a basis for determining engineered elements of possible projects.

Lake Bed Sediment Soil Sampling – Borings were taken around the Lake in areas that could be dredged. This material was then sent to a lab for analysis of grain size and potential contaminants.

Hydrology and Hydraulics of the Rock River and Lake Koshkonong using latest data.

Field Documentation of aquatic vegetation and habitat Conditions presented in an aquatic vegetation survey summary report.

Development of Experimental Projects

Sediment Analysis	Wave Analysis
Cost Analysis	Cultural Surveys

Environmental Coordination with other state and Federal agencies and offices: regulatory, cultural, etc.

Currently

The Planning Team currently is writing the Programmatic Environmental Assessment. The public will be given the opportunity to make comments on proposed management options and the final approved options will also go out for public review.