

Higher water: Groups oppose DNR's assessment of lake

Published Tuesday, January 18, 2005

By Dan Hinkel /Gazette Staff

It's going to be lawyers and litigation for Lake Koshkonong .

Two groups pushing for higher water levels have hired an attorney to oppose the state Department of Natural Resources' environmental assessment on the lake .

The Lake Koshkonong Recreation Association, "a group of businesses and sportsmen," objects to language in the assessment that the group says advocates lowering water levels in the summer.

The Rock River Koshkonong Association, another sports group, joined the recreation association to "demonstrate broad public support against the DNR's false conclusions," Frank Micale , Rock River Koshkonong Association president and Rock- Koshkonong Lake District board member, said in a news release.

The two groups will share Milwaukee environmental attorney Arthur Harrington , said Brian Christianson , lake district chairman. Harrington will work with lake district legal counsel William O'Connor, Christianson said.

Both groups share high-ranking members with the lake district administration.

The DNR's environmental assessment doesn't expressly advocate lowering the lake's summer water levels, as the recreation association said in a news release, said Ken Johnson of the DNR.

The assessment responds only to the lake district's request to raise the lake , Johnson said.

Dropping the summer water level isn't a possibility right now, Johnson said.

"We're not proposing to change summer water levels," he said.

Raising the lake's level as the district requested would increase erosion, endanger wetlands and would not greatly improve the lake as a fish habitat, the assessment says.

Summer drawdowns, along with carp suppression and fish stocking, would improve water quality and aquatic plant life, the assessment says.

The assessment does not issue a verdict on the district's request to raise the lake .

The issue isn't between high water and wetlands preservation, Christianson said.

Christianson, a state Republican consultant and vocal proponent of raising the lake , pointed to costly lake district efforts to armor shorelines against erosion. He counts the efforts as a success.

The DNR is not the right source for information about Lake Koshkonong , Christianson said.

"Their assumptions and claims put forth in their (environmental assessment) are unsubstantiated and without historical evidence," Christianson said in an e-mail.

The DNR's environmental assessment doesn't accurately reflect information from the environmental impact report the district commissioned for its request to raise the lake , he said.

The DNR "cherry-picked" information that supports its agenda, Christianson said.

The recreation association has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the DNR's Bark River Fish Hatchery, which stocks the lake with fish, said Gordon Millar, association president.

Raising the water level would improve fishing, Millar said.

The Rock River Koshkonong Association sponsors the Bounty Hunt fishing derby each year. This year's derby is scheduled for 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 29.

[RKLD Home](#) | [News Page](#)