

## Lower water: Wetlands group agrees with DNR's objectives

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By Dan Hinkel / Gazette Staff

Some want higher water. Some want lower water.

It isn't personal, said Rick Persson, chairman of the Lake Koshkonong Wetland Association.

"I like red; you like blue," he said.

People on both sides of the fight are convinced what they want is right for the lake . The political struggle over lake levels isn't the issue, Persson said.

"What we basically stand for is what's right for Lake Koshkonong ," Persson said.

The association tends to run in line with the state Department of Natural Resources' ideas about water levels, Persson said.

The DNR should know better than anyone else what is best for the lake , Persson said.

"The DNR is in the business of managing natural resources," he said. "I would think the DNR would know more about the subject."

The wetlands association is made up of duck hunters, biologists, botanists, environmentalists, bird-watchers and others concerned about maintaining the shallow lake's wetlands environment.

The group maintains a load of projects designed to protect the lake's plants and animals. The group has grabbed state grants for a floodplain-forest study, a floristic study and an orchid study.

The wetlands association opposes the lake district's aim of raising the lake more than half a foot. Persson rejects the district's claim that its research contradicts the DNR's assessment.

The DNR's analysis is trustworthy, Persson said.

"The lake district is saying it's not going to hurt anything," he said. "We have conflicting information."

The wetlands association wouldn't necessarily support or oppose the move if the DNR were ever to swerve away from the lake district's request to raise the lake and drawdown the lake in the summer, Persson said.

"If it's something that's beneficial for the lake , we would certainly be interested in it," he said.

Persson feels a sense of urgency about protecting the lake as a wetland.

"Each time the water's been raised, more and more habitat has disappeared," he said. "It's a disappearing resource that really can't be replaced."

