

Lake level decision could be weeks away

By **STAN MILAM**

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LAKE GENEVA — It could be mid-December before an order is issued to determine flow from and the level of Geneva Lake.

Michelle Hase, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources engineer in charge of the Geneva Lake study, said Monday field reports are not expected until later this week. It could be the second week of December before findings are discussed with DNR officials in Madison and the Geneva Lake Level Corp.

"We will discuss our findings and recommendations with local officials before an order is issued," Hase said. "Then a water level order will be issued that will determine flow at all times."

Local officials question a DNR proposal to increase flow from the lake into the White River. Hase said the DNR stepped in following complaints of the river drying up, which resulted in fish kill.

Hase is waiting on two reports. Stream and fishery biologists are conducting a study of the river, and a lake biologist is preparing a separate study of the lake impact from a lower level.

"Those two reports are expected by the end of the week," Hase said. "I'm not sure how long it will take to review the reports with our people in Madison. It could be a couple of weeks."

The corporation was ordered in July to open the Geneva Lake spillway to increase flow into the White River. Larry Larkin, a spokesman for the corporation, said the increased flow into the river resulted in a dangerously low lake level.

Larkin's analysis was confirmed by pier and marina owners who were forced to use floating barges to move lake residents' boats off pier lifts for winter storage.

The level decreased as much as 18 inches on the western end of the lake, according to Kevin Kirkland, owner of Lake Geneva Marine, Fontana. The lower lake level could damage cribs used to secure piers, he said.

Hase said the DNR received a complaint regarding cribs and the lake biologist will look into the complaint.

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