

Joint ownership of Indianford Dam possible

(Published Wednesday, February 09, 2000 10:45:02 AM CST)

By Carrie Michael/The Janesville Gazette Staff

They say history repeats itself.

Rock County, Jefferson County and a new lake district are considering joint ownership of the Indianford Dam and sharing future costs of maintaining it.

The concept is not new. In 1961, the county negotiated with Jefferson and Dane counties for joint ownership of the Indianford Dam, but the plan fell by the wayside, said Tom Kautz, Rock County parks director.

Wisconsin Power and Light was selling the Indianford Dam and offered it to Rock County.

"Rock County took ownership of the dam," Kautz said. "And it's been a bone of contention ever since."

But on Tuesday, Tom Schroeder, Rock County corporation counsel, told members of the county transportation committee that he met last week with a lawyer for the lake district and corporation counsel for Jefferson County. They've tentatively outlined a plan to share the annual maintenance costs, Schroeder said.

First, the dam must be repaired to comply with state Department of Natural Resources regulations. Schroeder said he would ask Jefferson County and the Rock-Koshkonong Lake District to help pay for the \$491,698 restoration.

Costs after that point might run just \$65,000 annually.

"That's pretty much peanuts," Schroeder said. "It seems like a reasonable solution."

"Things hopefully are on the fast track now."

Phil Ristow, Jefferson County corporation counsel, said he doesn't have specific direction from the county board regarding the dam.

Ristow said he'd like to have a draft of the partnership agreement so county officials can review it.

"All we're looking to do is provide a vehicle for them if they decided to go that way," Ristow said. "That's one of the options that we're working on" regarding the dam.

Ristow said until all parties learned in December that the DNR wouldn't require a \$1 million fish ladder, it was difficult for the Jefferson County Board to know what it would have to contribute.

"Our board isn't really educated and up to speed," Ristow said. "Our board simply hasn't taken a position on it."

The lawyers will produce a draft joint ownership document within two weeks, Schroeder said. The Rock and Jefferson county boards must approve the document and the relationship.

Jerry Richardson, marina owner and treasurer of the lake district board of commissioners, said Wednesday morning that his board must approve a preliminary draft of any agreement. The entire district membership--more than 5,000 property owners--also would vote on the agreement.

Dane County officials recently have said they'd be interested in a one-time \$3,000 payment to represent their share of the benefits from Lake Koshkonong.

In other business, the transportation committee unanimously recommended that the county authorize an agreement for daily operation with the Indianford Water Power Company.

The Watertown hydroelectric company has expressed interest in producing electricity at Indianford if Rock County keeps the dam.

The committee also unanimously recommended that the county spend \$49,137 on repairs to the west wicket gate. The agreement states that Tom Reiss, CEO of Indianford Water Power Company, will repay the county for any repairs that would enable him to generate electricity.

He'd repay the full amount on this repair. Of the \$218,555 worth of scheduled repairs, Reiss would repay the county \$165,126, according to county memos.

Schroeder said he would bring a long-term lease agreement for Reiss to the Feb. 22 county transportation committee meeting. Reiss needs this 50-year lease to get licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

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