

State won't demand fish ladder

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Move clears way for Rock County to decide what to do with dam

JEFFERSON — State officials say they will not require a so-called fish ladder for the Indlunford dam, which means Rock County can now decide what to do with the structure.

A letter received by county officials earlier this month said the state Department of Natural Resources has decided a fish ladder, which enables fish to pass over the dam, was not needed.

The structure is not necessary because fish surveys do not indi-

cate a significant difference in fish populations upstream and downstream from the dam, said Don Bush, DNR fish manager. In addition, Lake Koshkonong lacks a desirable habitat to improve spawning success from fish migrating over the dam, Bush said in the letter.

The future of the dam has been undecided. Earlier this year, the DNR put Rock County on notice that it must repair the dam on the Rock River or pay fines up to \$1,000 per day.

Jammed wicket gates, structural damages to the dam and an aging powerhouse heeded to be repaired to bring the dam into compliance, the agency said.

Besides the repairs, the department said it might also require a fish ladder at the dam. Designing and installing such a structure would cost between \$100,000 and \$1 million.

The county, as the dam's owner, had a dilemma: Repair the dam at a cost of \$504,000 or pay \$819,720

to have the dam removed and risk losing the economic benefits of Lake Koshkonong.

Some county supervisors said they did not know if they would vote to keep the dam if an expensive fish passage was needed. Other officials balked at paying for the dam's repairs — and future upkeep — when so much of the lake was in Jefferson County.

In September, the Rock County Board unanimously voted to ask

Jefferson County for a financial commitment to the dam. But Jefferson County officials said they did not want to make a commitment until they knew what would be required.

Now that the fish ladder will not be required, Rock County officials plan to meet with officials from Dane and Jefferson counties in January, said Rock County Board Chairman Terry Maybee.

"We're going to ask these folks what they plan to do now that they know we don't need the fish ladder," Maybee said.