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DNR inspection shows no blockage at Indianford Dam

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JIM DAYTON
Tuesday, October 10, 2017

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INDIANFORD—State Department of Natural Resources officials found nothing wrong with the Indianford Dam during an inspection last week, despite claims that the dam was intentionally clogged this summer.

DNR workers visited the dam Thursday and inspected the wicket gates inside the powerhouse. **They found no significant blockage, and the gates were fully functional,** said Rob Davis, water regulations and zoning

engineer.

The Rock-Koshkonong Lake District issued a news release Monday praising the DNR's observations.



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Lake district officials faced persistent criticism this summer from a few residents who believed the district had purposely let the dam get clogged.

Blocked gates would hold back enough water on Lake Koshkonong to increase recreation on the lake, local resident George Wellenkotter told The Gazette in August.

District members fought for more than a decade to raise the lake's water level by 2.6 inches, which finally happened this year. Higher water would enhance the recreational appeal of Lake Koshkonong, which is naturally shallow, and boost activity at lakeside businesses, they said.

Much of the Rock River was under slow/no wake orders this summer. Wellenkotter blamed the clogged dams; others blamed the lack of rainfall.

The slow/no wake orders increased travel times for boaters going from Indianford to Lake Koshkonong. Some Indianford business owners had told The Gazette the low water on the river decreased customer traffic.

None of the businesses directly blamed the lake district for their troubles.

To alleviate the controversy, the lake district brought UW-Madison hydrology expert Rob Montgomery to its annual meeting in July to explain how the wicket gates affect water flow. The district later invited Wellenkotter to clean the gates himself.

What Wellenkotter found during his inspection is debatable.

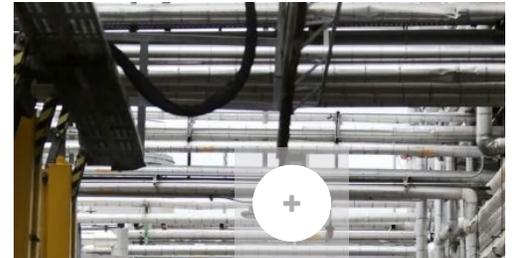
Lake district Chairman Brian Christianson told The Gazette in an email that Wellenkotter found only one branch. Wellenkotter said he found plenty of blockage and wasn't given the proper tools to fully inspect the dam's gates.

In Monday's news release, Christianson called Wellenkotter's claims "bogus." The DNR's inspection last week confirmed his belief, he said in the release.



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