

Notes from the first Lake Levels subcommittee meeting held on December 18, 2013, at the Chamber of Commerce Building, in McHenry.

Members in attendance included Bob Browning, and Bob Hoffmann, subcommittee co-chairs, Morgan France, Richard Matlick, Paul Weiler and Roger Zbel. Staff in attendance included Don Cosden and Alan Klotz of DNR. On the phone were Shawn Seaman, of DNR, John Grace, Lyn Poorman and John Smith of DNR, and Mike Bilek, staff to the subcommittee. Two members of the public were also in attendance.

Housekeeping issues were discussed including ground rules, Roberts Rules, and selection of the second Wednesday of each month at 1 pm for the standing meeting date and time.

Subcommittee members introduced themselves and shared the perspective that they hold regarding the issue of Lake Levels.

The conversation moved in the direction of Temperature Enhancement Releases (TER's). Questions around this issue will be formalized and submitted to the DNR reps for inclusion in a presentation on the fishery and the TER's, to be given later this year.

The need for a predictive model of Lake Levels and an allocation formula would help with water savings if weather, power generating, and other factors were in line. Does anyone do this now, and if so, can they present to this subcommittee.

One Goal might be to have a boating season from mid April till mid October. Critical use times are from Memorial Day till Labor Day. Most complaints occur when water levels are at 2458. Efforts should be made to maintain at or above that level for as long as possible, with the consideration of the other users.

Several questions were discussed:

1. At the previous three-year review of the permit, how did Brookfield arrive at the figure that extending the rule ban one month in June would cost them 40% of their revenues for the year?
2. What are the numbers that support that statement?
3. How many people fish the four miles of the Yough (that benefit from the TER)?
4. How many people use the white water? ...Use the Lake? What is the economic impact of the varied interests? Around 2008, three marinas sold at a value of over 13 million dollars.
5. There are recent studies of sedimentation showing there are areas where as much as 2 feet of silt has built up. Since the cost of dredging is prohibitive, (around 30 million), keeping the lake at a reasonable level of 2458 would negate the dredging need.
6. The last lake permit process included only one lake resident, and most lake residents and users were not aware of the potential impacts of the MDE permit.

The last part of the meeting focused on the information gaps, and the following areas were identified as questions and/or data gaps:

1. Can we use the Hoyes Run gage and a closer weather station (or weather data from other sources) in the model used to determine Temperature Enhancement Releases?

2. Can we use current satellite data for predicting cloud cover in support of the model for determining Temperature Enhancement Releases?
3. How many fishermen traditionally fish that portion of the river impacted by the TER?
4. Regarding evaporation of water from DCL -- is there a useful formula and data from DCL or another body of water close to DCL that can be used to assist in the predictive model/water budget?
5. What is the current leakage through the wicket gates at the power plant?
6. What are the recorded allocations of water from DCL for the years 2013 and earlier?

One of the bits of information that came up as a result of the discussion about TER is that the expert on TER is one Dr. Steve Schreiner (phonetic) who works for Versar (NFI). Dr. Schreiner is the expert on the TER formula/model and is contracted to Sean Seaman to provide support in this area. Some of the data is provided to MDE that Schreiner provides. Sean Seaman advised yesterday that he could probably answer about 75% of our questions. Due to the fact that Dr. Schreiner is an expensive consultant, Shawn Seaman of DNR's Power Plant division offered to take a shot at answering questions at a future meeting to minimize financial impacts to the contract.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 8, 2014, at 1 pm at the Chamber of Commerce Building in McHenry. Morgan France will present the work he has done on a water budget, and a discussion will follow to help prepare the subcommittee members for the MDE presentation on the same topic later this month.

(From notes taken by Bob Browning, Bob Hoffmann and Mike Bilek)

jmbilek 01-04-14