

Totogatic Wildlife Area Flowage and Dam Meeting

Hayward High School Auditorium

January 13, 2016

DNR staff present:

Jason Fleener – Wildlife Bureau

Bill Clark and Shawn Haseleu – Environmental Analysis, DOT Liaisons, Spooner

Craig Roberts – Fisheries Biologist, Spooner

Ryan Magana – National Heritage Program, Spooner

Mike Bulgrim – Wildlife and Property Manager, Hayward

Frank Dallam – Dam Safety and Flood Plain, Spooner

Craig Roesler – Water Resources, Spooner

Paul Bruggink – Lands and Facilities, Rhinelander

Kathy Bartilson – Wild River Project and North District Wastewater Supervisor

Members of the public in attendance: ~60, including around 3 media representatives

Meeting opened with presentations by DNR staff:

Welcome and logistics – Paul

Overview of the watershed and Wild River Designation – Kathy

History of the dam – Mike

Proposed bridge construction – Bill

Fisheries features – Craig Roberts

Wildlife and Natural Heritage features – Ryan

Review of options for the dam and flowage - Jason

Questions from the audience:

1. What is the cost of construction of the new bridge?

Bill – cost figures can be obtained from DOT staff

2. Was there an attempt to seed wild rice in the flowage a few years ago?
Jason – there may have been but success is unlikely if there isn't careful water level control.
3. What are the Pittman-Robertson funding implications?
Mike explained the background on this funding source. Implications include needing federal permission to make alterations to a project originally funded with these monies.
4. If the dam was built with these funds, does it have to be maintained, or can it be removed?
Jason – federal staff will look at the original purpose of the dam (waterfowl habitat) to see if any further option serves the same purpose. Federal sources contacted supported any option that
5. Does the Pittman Robertson funding require dam maintenance *in perpetuity*? Doesn't this mean forever?
6. Will there be about 200 – 400 acres of wetland loss to forest habitat?
7. How did the dam get in this deteriorated condition; Counties and others have to keep their dams in repair?
Frank – an inspection and dam failure analysis were performed, and improvements needed were recommended
8. Where did the dam replacement costs come from?
Estimates are from initial project scoping documents
9. What kinds of dams were considered? What are the details on the various options considered?
Frank – various types of dams can be considered; the type of needs to be tailored to the volume and velocity of the river at the project site (among other features). They will not be allowed to put in a fixed-crest dam.
10. Comment: There are also woodcock out there; when we lose places like this, it puts more pressure on the rest of the places that support fish and waterfowl.
11. Further comment: participant didn't believe that wild rice would come back naturally.
12. Next participant's comment: this is a valuable roost area for waterfowl and a good hunting spot. Ducks fly to nearby lakes like Totogatic Lake and Black Brook Flowage and come back at night to rest on the Totogatic Flowage. There may not be a lot of good duck hunting in the area, but this is a good spot.

13. What wetland mitigation would be required and what would it cost?
Mitigation not required for removal projects; rebuild or repair may need wetland mitigation if greater than 10,000 square feet of wetlands are propose to be filled as a part of structure or spillway.
14. Has anyone contacted Ducks Unlimited for funding assistance to rebuild the dam?
DU has been contacted, but they are more interested in investing in areas that are more productive for waterfowl with better nesting habitat.
15. How far downstream will the new bridge be placed?
Bill and Shawn – 250 to 300 feet downstream
16. Will the dam and bridge be standalone structures?
Bill – they will be separated structures.
17. This dam has a history of breaking – for \$500,000 – how long will it last?
No one can predict – a concrete structure can last 50 to 100 years, but it's all dependent on many variables in the project site.
18. We seem to have 50-and 100-year frequency rainfall events – is it good or bad to have the dam in light of higher intensity rainfall?
The dam would have to be built for the hydraulic capacity needed at this location.
19. Participant brought a letter from the Town Chair of Town of Lenroot.
20. What is the change in surface area of wetlands and open water if the dam is removed?
Participant felt the wildlife area will become just a swampy creek.
21. Why aren't grant funds being used? Duck hunters, trappers and other recreational users pay for gas to get out to our wildlife areas. Why can't this dam be replaced using gas funds for ATV crossing and hunting and fishing access?
22. Participant would like to see deeper and more open water retained for migrant ducks and larger watercraft. There are disabled veterans that fish below the Nelson Lake dam and would like to keep easy access for this use?
23. When you remove the dam will invasive species come in there?
Mike – invasive species from upstream can be carried downstream with river flow regardless pf whether the dam is there or not.
24. Observation: Participant assisted with banding over 42 trumpeter swans on the flowage in the past.

25. If water needs to be released for cranberry operations, and the dam is not there impounding sufficient volume, does that mean Nelson Lake would need to be drawn down?
Mike – we have no plans to drawdown
26. What is the depth of the channel in the flowage?
Contour map from 1971 is between 10 and 12 foot depth.
27. Participant is concerned that lowering the water level up to 3 feet will leave very little depth in the channel and at the landings. What will the depth if the dam is removed?
Craig – 13 transects across the flowage showed areas of 6 to 10 feet; there are shallow areas also of only 3 feet.
Frank: There will be sediment movement if the dam is removed, so a new channel will likely form.
28. If there is very little flow, will water be taken from Nelson Lake?
Frank: In an extreme drought, the minimum river flow (Q7.10) would have to be released from the Nelson Lake dam. Frank is not aware of a time when the water was so low that no water was passing over the Nelson Lake dam.
29. The current dam has a deck used as a bridge. Is there any cost savings for a combined bridge and dam?
Bill: DOT is not interested in building a combined structure because of safety concerns for both the roadway and the dam.
Frank: with a combined structure, the dam has to be built significantly stronger to support road traffic as well as holding back water.
30. If the road is moved off the dam, will the dam last longer?
Frank: The repairs are needed regardless, reconstruction would possibly be cheaper.
31. How much money does the DNR have right now to work on this project and have we applied for any funding from other sources?
We haven't applied for construction funding because we are still in the planning and public input stage. Grantors generally want to review the final chosen option in funding requests.
32. How many different dam designs do we have cost estimates for?
Jason – we have preliminary cost estimates – final costs will depend on the design chosen and the bids received.
33. Participant wants to see a bridge and a dam and is not concerned if they are one structure or two.
Bill – the decision is already made
34. Stream biologist feels this is a very good area for waterfowl hunting and good waterfowl habitat. In general, he's in favor of removing dams, but this is a special area and not a

typical mill pond dam. He named off many species that were listed here in the Breeding Bird Atlas (wrens, terns, etc.)

35. Comment – would like to see the Totogatic Flowage maintained as it was originally conceived when first constructed. It’s a quality, trophy flowage for Northern Pike, but not as good now as when the water was higher. You can still catch a 20-lb pike out of it today. It would be a shame to change that flowage to something other than what is today [Applause].

Craig Roberts – yes, this is possible, but not common. There are management tradeoffs that affect both the fishery and the wildlife, particularly with water level control.

36. Does DNR have a policy for dam removal?

Frank – it’s not the DNR policy – it’s the dam owner’s choice whether or not to rebuild, as long as they keep it in code compliance.

37. Local representative mentioned loss of the dam forming 200-acre Lake Magee in Exeland which has significantly deteriorated in his opinion since the dam failed and was removed. He’s concerned that wetland loss is being glossed over when the importance of wetland habitat is stressed by the Department. He wants to see the property managed as is and the flowage maintained. He also had a concern about silt removal and thought silt was important in fish recruitment.

Paul pointed out that no decision has been made

38. Whose responsibility was it to maintain the dam?

Frank – Wisconsin DNR

39. Were Pittman-Robertson funds available for maintenance of the dam as well as construction?

Yes – there is funding for basic, critical maintenance needs like any other dam would do.

40. Is the essential issue that the cement is deteriorating?

Frank – concrete deterioration was identified as a concern in the inspection report. It was not considered an immediate threat of failure, but something to address over time

41. What was the time frame for making a decision on the dam?

Ongoing.

42. Can a weight limit be put on the bridge/dam to preserve it?

Mike B – the Engineers that did the inspection did not feel there was an immediate risk involved.

43. What’s the time frame for the bridge construction?

Bill – complete construction in 2017

44. With the traffic off the dam?
45. Comment – felt our presentation about fish and wildlife was very negative, with no positive comments about why the flowage/dam should be saved.
46. Comment –Participant feels this is a great place – the participant drove up from Chippewa Falls to be at the meeting and get informed. He felt it should be maintained as a flowage?
47. Will the camping area downstream of the dam be taken out with the new bridge?
Mike: this is an illegal camping spot as identified on the map (not allowed on state land).
48. Comment: What about Mother Nature? This isn't a natural resource, it's an artificial resource. There are values to streams, flowages, and lakes. No opinion on whether or not to remove dam. The decision will need to be based on the values and goals.
49. How will the decision be made?
Jason: will review public input as a result of Management Plan development.
50. Comment: Thanks to DNR staff for coming for and providing good information. There is a tangible value to having a quiet place like this without development. He encourages us to keep it as is.
51. What are the anticipated impacts to the fishery if the dam is removed?
52. What will happen to wild rice if the dam is removed?
53. What is a drawdown and why are they done?
54. How can DOT fund the new bridge project?
55. What are the next steps for public input?