

## Indianford Dam's loss may aid region's tourism

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By Catherine W. Idzerda/The Janesville Gazette Staff

Jet skiers would become bird watchers.

Motor boats would transform into canoes.

Private beaches would become wetland tourist spots.

That's Martine Koeppel's vision of what Lake Koshkonong could be without the Indianford Dam.

Koeppel, who serves as the president of the Jefferson County Environmental Network, believes removing the dam would be best for the environment--and the economy.

"Losing the Indianford Dam would create more tourism, not less, for Rock and Jefferson counties," Koeppel said. "Over 400,000 visitors visit the Horicon Marsh every year; in 1998 tourism expenditures in Dodge County were \$53 million."

Koeppel believes many of Jefferson County's residents and board members share her views.

"I've talked with the majority of Jefferson County Board members and they're not putting a penny into this. They don't want that dam," Koeppel said. "And plenty of people--even some people around the lake and south of the dam--don't want it either."

What about the public hearings where scores of people stood up in support of the dam?

"That's all the big-mouths who step forward," Koeppel said. "Nobody told us about those meetings."

But Koeppel's critics say she's not completely in touch with public opinion.

"I feel Jefferson County has a big obligation here," Jefferson County Supervisor Ron Buchanan said. "And I'm sure that there are other supervisors support keeping the dam. They're fair-minded people."

A survey of JCEN members showed that between 60 and 65 percent of its 2,500 members support the removal of the dam, Koeppel said.

"The removal percentage goes up even higher when asked if they should help pay for the dam's repair and annual maintenance of the dam," Koeppel said.

For Buchanan, Jefferson County has a moral and legal obligation to help with the dam.

"Look at how much of the lake is in Jefferson County," Buchanan said. "And if the lake disappeared, we would have to raise everyone else's taxes."

Jefferson County Supervisor Jim Hartwig also disputed Koeppel's statements.

"We don't know what our financial commitment is going to be yet. We haven't had the meetings on it," Hartwig said. "But I doubt very much that the majority of the supervisors support removing the dam."

Jefferson County Board Chairman Wendell Wilson said Thursday that his county probably would be interested in contributing to the dam's repair, but officials needed more information first.

"We need a number, something that's concrete. I can't go to my board and ask for 25 percent or 75 percent of repair costs. My board's going to say '25 percent of what?'" Wilson said.

It's estimated that repairing the dam would cost more than \$600,000; removing the dam would cost more than \$800,000, according to a 1998 study. Yearly upkeep on the dam could cost between \$50,000 and \$75,000, Rock County Parks Director Tom Kautz said.

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