



July 20, 2005

State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Jim Doyle, Governor
Scott Hassett, Secretary

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Josephine Heimler
5829 Emerson St.
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Dear Mrs. Heimler:

I received your July 11th letter and can understand your concerns with low water levels this year. As with much of Wisconsin, rainfall is significantly less this year, which results in lower water levels in our waterways. The State Climatologist's office reports that the Lake Koshkonong area is in the severe drought area and has had less than half of the average precipitation over the last three month period. The lower Rock River flow is causing the low water levels on Lake Koshkonong. The Rock River flow at Fort Atkinson, upstream of the lake, is about one third of the normal flow for this time of the year.

The department has not changed anything having to do with water levels on Lake Koshkonong this summer. The water level order that governs how the Indianford Dam is to be operated has been in place since the early 1990's. All of the Indianford Dam gates have been closed since June 16 except for June 27 when one gate was opened and June 28 when two gates were opened because the lake level was rising above normal. All gates were closed and have remained closed since June 29.

I'm sorry you think my staff is not working to preserve the ecology of the Lake Koshkonong area. The biologists that have been working on the lake issues are well-educated and hard-working people that believe strongly they are working for the good of the environment. Many of their findings are outlined in the recent environmental assessment completed for Lake Koshkonong. I understand you commented on the assessment during the public comment period. Thank you for your comments during the process.

As you are probably aware, the department modified the Indianford Dam water level order for the winter levels but did not grant the Rock Koshkonong Lake District's request to raise the summer levels. Now the issue will be going to a hearing. Even if the lake district's request to increase the summer levels had been granted, the Lake's water levels would still be lower than you have normally experienced because of the drought. Rock Koshkonong Lake District wasn't proposing to change the height of the dam. They were only proposing to close the gates sooner. Since the gates have essentially been closed for over a month, even the district's proposal would not have avoided the low water levels experienced this summer.

Now that southern Wisconsin has had rain, I see by the Lake Koshkonong level gage that the water level has increased. Hopefully these higher water levels are addressing your issues. Thank you for your letter.

Sincerely,

P. Scott Hassett
Secretary