

Lake Koshkonong Divided Over Raising Lake Level

Lake Level Issue Debated For 20 Years

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NEWVILLE, Wis. -- While the lake level debate might just be starting up on Lake Mendota, it's been an ongoing issue for years on Lake Koshkonong.

 **VIDEO:** [Watch The Report](#)

"It's been going on since I've been with the department, going on 29 years," said DNR Public Affairs manager Greg Matthews. "I dare say it will probably be going on 30 years from now." More than 20 years ago, a group of property owners on Lake Koshkonong asked the DNR to raise the lake approximately 18 inches.

The DNR denied the request.

[Lake Koshkonong didn't initially start out as a lake](#), but rather a marsh.

When the [Indianford dam](#) was built in the mid-1800s, the Koshkonong Marsh became Lake Koshkonong.

Even now, the lake is only 7 feet at its deepest point.

In more recent years, the [Rock-Koshkonong Lake District](#) was formed. The RKLD represents thousands of homeowners and businesses on the lake and Rock River.

The group has repeatedly asked the DNR to raise the lake level by 7 inches.

RKLD members said that while this year the water is unusually high, typically by this time of summer, they have to extend their piers far into the lake in order to dock their boat on their property.

"During a typical June, July and August, when most of the seasonal campers are here and most folks are trying to get use out of their boats and water skis, and we can control the low water, we shouldn't let it drop to a point where boating navigation becomes a dangerous safety issue," said RKLD chairman Brian Christianson.



The flip side of the issue are the environmental and hunting groups who oppose raising the lake.

Members of the [Lake Koshkonong Wetland Association](#) said the area was meant to be a marsh and adding more water is only hurting, not helping the natural habitat.

"Raising the water 7 inches would saturate a lot of the wetlands we have today and make the regeneration process very difficult and would start to diminish that," said wetlands association chairman Rick Persson.

Christianson maintains that the RKLD is also concerned about the wetlands habitat and has been offering grants to build rip rap barriers to protect the marsh areas. He said 12 protective walls have been built to date.

Still, the [latest round of litigation](#) found in favor of the Koshkonong Wetlands Association. [RKLD officials plan to appeal that decision](#) to the state appellate court.

"These things -- whether it's raising it, keeping it the same or lowering it -- are always contentious," said Matthews.