

Soggy weather doesn't dampen plans for lake

By STACY VOGEL

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Photo



Photo by [Kyle Bursaw](#)

Brian Christianson, chairman of the Rock Koshkonong Lake District, explains to media and other officials including State Representative Micheal Sheridan, some of the issues he has seen on Lake Koshkonong.

Photo



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Members of the tour, including State Representative Andy Jorgenson, far left, along with media and a representative from the DNR, deal with poor weather conditions for the tour including rain that ended up cutting the tour short.

EDGERTON — The Rock-Koshkonong Lake District has spent years fighting with the state over water levels.

But as that fight awaits a decision, District Chairman Brian Christianson thinks it's time to move on to other projects, such as dredging and manmade islands, that could benefit the lake.

"A year from now, win, lose or draw, that adversarial relationship that we have right now (with the DNR) will be completely gone," he said. "We want to build a bridge back to the DNR."

Christianson took a step in building that bridge Tuesday by inviting Department of Natural Resources officials, state legislators and reporters on a pontoon tour of the lake. Rain, wind and waves cut the tour short, but they couldn't dampen Christianson's enthusiasm about the lake's potential.

For years, the district waged a legal battle with the DNR. The district wants the DNR to allow higher water levels, and the case awaits a ruling in state appellate court.

But even if the case goes to the Wisconsin Supreme Court, Christianson expects it to be wrapped up within a year, he said. The time has come for the district and the DNR to focus on other plans to improve the lake, he said.

The state approved \$100,000 in its biennial budget for a comprehensive study of the lake. That makes the lake eligible for a matching grant from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The study will look at how projects such as dredging and manmade islands could improve the lake, said Ken Johnson, DNR regional water leader. It could include preliminary engineering, soil sampling and environmental assessments.

The biggest cost will be staff time, Johnson said. Staff from the DNR, lake district and Army Corps probably will participate.

The district hopes to enact a few projects of its own this winter while the study is going on, said Rob Montgomery, water resource engineer for the lake district. For instance, it might try dredging a small part of the lake and using the sediment to create an island.

It hopes to receive grants from private organizations such as the National Audubon Society to pay for the experiments, Christianson said.

Dredging and islands could improve the lake's environmental and recreational prospects, Christianson said. He believes the projects could:

- Break up wind.
- Help prevent erosion.
- Offer new habitats for migratory birds.

-- Provide depth and structure to the lake's fish hatchery.

-- Offer safer boating and recreation.

The plans impressed Rep. Mike Sheridan, D-Janesville, and Rep. Andy Jorgensen, D-Fort Atkinson, who proposed the funding for the lake study.

"(The lake) is a great resource for this area, and we want to make sure we take care of it," Sheridan said.

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