



Village of Waterford
123 North River Street
Waterford WI 53185

June

July 18, 2015 Village of Waterford Opposition to Racine County Drainage District Permit Request for Permanent Winter Drawdown

The Village of Waterford Board of Trustees approved a motion to stand in opposition of the Racine County Drainage District's permit request for a permanent winter drawdown of the Fox River. The board noted that the village has invested substantially in the Fox River and the riverfront to improve access, seeing that such investment, not only enhances quality of life for residents and visitors alike, but is also important to the economic development of the community.

Investment includes funding from the Village of Waterford, the State of Wisconsin, Racine County, community organizations, and grant-funding organizations. Funding from all organizations totals nearly \$640,000 to date.

- **\$17,200**—River Rhythms Stage – twice monthly concerts draws 800-1000 residents and visitors each month over the summer. Initial financial support from the Village, Waterford Area Chamber of Commerce, business sponsors and Racine Community Foundation. River Rhythms is now an independent organization relying on sponsors. The stage was expanded in 2015 to allow for larger bands. The \$7,000 cost was shared by River Rhythms and the Village.
- **\$12,280** – Lighting in Village Hall Park, along the Fox River.
- **\$125,000** – Streambank Stabilization & Rain Gardens in Village Hall Park. The shoreline above and alongside the dam needed shoring up and stream-bank erosion due to swelling below the dam needed repair. The project was funded by Southeastern Wisconsin Fox River Commission (SEWRFC) and the Village of Waterford
- **\$17,550** – Whitford Park Streambank Stabilization. Additional grant support from the Potpourri Garden Club for native plantings to maintain integrity of the riverbank.
- **\$31,598** – Graef Concept Plan for Riverfront and Ten Club Park.
- **\$5,600** – Park Benches & Trash/Recycle Receptacles for parks along the riverfront
- **\$162,800** – Multi-Jurisdictional project (Village of Waterford and Racine County) for Canoe/Kayak Launches with grant funding from Wisconsin Department of

Continued

Natural Resources Stewardship Grant (\$80,988) and Racine Community Foundation (\$40,000). Construction to be completed by November 1, 2015

- \$41,000 – Kapur Preliminary Engineering for Ten Club Park – Initial surveys have been done in preparation for infrastructure construction to facilitate park development along the river.
- **\$50,000** – Shoreland erosion project around the Fox Isle Development. Project of Village, SEWFRC, and Racine County.
- **\$200,000** – Annual state grant funds provided by the State of Wisconsin to SEWFRC.

Promoting the Fox River as a Recreation Destination

- The construction of canoe/kayak launches is possible because of a DNR Stewardship Grant and a grant from the Racine Community Foundation. In applying for the grant, community organizations wrote letters of support and shared with the Village their interest in scheduling activities related to the launches and river recreation. The Village sees this as an economic tool, as well as a quality of life issue. Envisioning development around the river includes business to support the interest in paddling the river such as supplying gear, transporting paddlers to put in north of Waterford, and the paddlers who stop at restaurants and shops in the downtown area or pause and relax at some of our parks.
- The Village staff are scheduled to meet with staff from the National Park Service, representatives from Kane County, Illinois, and the Rock River Trail Initiative to begin planning to establish the Fox River Water Trail as a nationally designated water trail through the National Park Service which is presented by the Secretary of the Interior. National trail designation has only been awarded to 18 trails at this point. The Fox River Water Trail aims to be number 19.
- Real Racine, the Racine County Convention & Visitors Bureau has named the Fox River Water Trail as a key element of their strategic marketing plan, naming the Fox River as a recreation destination and included 2-page spread in its 2015 Visitor's Guide.
- The Wisconsin Department of Tourism has joined Village staff and leaders to paddle on the Fox River and is interested in partnering with the Village and Real Racine for the grand opening of the Canoe/Kayak launches in Spring of 2016 to market the Fox River Water Trail.

Permanent annual drawdown concerns of residents in the Villages of Waterford and Rochester

Meeting: Elaine Johnson, Water Management Specialist (DNR) June 19, 2015

Background:

3/23/2015

Over 100 citizens from Waterford/Rochester area attended a meeting at Waterford Village hall, sponsored by the Village of Waterford. Presentation was to inform citizens and others of the Dredging Process for the RCDD canal from Wind Lake to the Fox River (approximately 9 miles) and the proposal for a permanent annual drawdown of the Fox River Impoundment from October 1 through March 1 each year

3/26/2015

As result of the information meeting, a citizens group was formed (citizens from the Villages of Waterford and Rochester) to oppose the permanent annual drawdown of the Fox River impoundment.

3/28/2015

The citizen group met for the first time on March 28, 2015.

4/13/2015

The citizen group met with the Waterford Village Board on April 13, 2015 to seek their support to oppose the RCDD request for a permanent annual drawdown of the Fox River impoundment.

- o The Village of Waterford passed a resolution to oppose the permanent annual drawdown of the Fox River Impoundment at their board meeting
- o They also resolved to support the citizen group in efforts to oppose the permanent annual draw down of the Fox River Impoundment.

4/27/2015

The citizen group also met with the Village of Rochester Board on April 27, 2015 to seek a similar support to oppose the permanent annual drawdown of the Fox River Impoundment.

- o Subsequent to this meeting, the Village of Rochester passed a resolution to oppose the permanent annual draw down of the Fox River Impoundment

5/8/2015

The citizen group met with officials of the Village of Waterford on May 8, 2015 to begin a dialogue on the issues and problems associated with the permanent annual draw down of the Fox River Impoundment.

- o Officials from the Villages of Rochester and Waterford arranged a meeting with officials of the RCDD and a small group from the citizen group.

5/14/2015, 5/18/2015, 6/10/2015

Several meetings were held to discuss each party's position regarding the permanent annual draw down of the Fox River Impoundment. Meetings occurred on May 14, 2015, May 18, 2015 and June 10, 2015.

- o A proposal to draw down the Rochester dam to 3 feet as measured at the Bridge in the Village of Rochester was discussed as relating to the annual drawdown permit, The normal range for the that location is 4.2 to 5.2 feet.
- o The citizen group has not accepted the proposed 3.0 feet level drawdown as this would not be conducive to recreation activities on the river and would still be damaging to the fishery.
- o Note: The river level is measured at the Hwy D bridge gauge which does not reflect the actual depth of the river since major silting has occurred over the years since the gauge was created

Issues and Problems for Village Residents:

The proposed annual draw down of the Fox River impoundment would lower the water level to 1 to 1 ½ feet at the bridge in the Village of Rochester from October 1 through March 1. This was done last October, reducing the river to a creek in the vast majority of the Impoundment.

The Impact of a permanent annual drawdown to the Village of Waterford residents include but not limited to the following:

- a. Many different uses of the Fox River: Kayaking, canoeing, fishing, bird watching, and just enjoyment of watching nature on the river will be severely impacted
- b. Potential impact to property values of low water levels for almost 6 months each year (\$30,000 to \$35,000 impact to value of land according to assessor)
- c. At 10 Club Park in downtown Waterford and at Whitford Park just south of downtown, fishing will be curtailed due to water being too low and also too far from the river bank
- d. Use of the Fox River from the Waterford dam to the Rochester dam for canoeing and kayaking will be severely impacted due to low water
- e. \$162,800 being spent on building canoe/kayak launches and portages in the Villages of Waterford and Rochester will not be useable for almost 6 months of the year if an annual drawdown occurs
- f. Drawdown of the water will not allow safe entry onto the river due to deep muck that exists in many places within the impoundment
- g. The river is the visual centerpiece of the Village and its residents will be cheated out of having this beautiful resource for almost one-half a year if an annual drawdown occurs
- h. The downtown parks along the river are destinations for many entertainment events and the backdrop of the Fox River lends its special beauty to these events making them unique in their riverside location thus creating an environment people want to come to
- i. The residents of the Village take pride in the River and a permanent annual drawdown will no doubt effect the social well-being of our community having to look a mud, muck and a creek size flow instead of our beautiful running river filling the banks
- j. The fishery in the river will be severely harmed as documented by the DNR report relating to the permit application for the permanent annual drawdown
- k. Eagles have recently returned to the Fox River in the Waterford/Rochester area. These adult and juvenile Eagles need open water and the fishery in the winter to survive.
- l. Presence of birds and water fowl is greatly reduced during periods of drawdown
- m. Animal life is dramatically reduced by the draw downs we have experienced.
- n. As a result of the October 2014 to March 2015 drawdown snowmobiles were observed running the river bed in the impoundment (first time to our knowledge this has happened). Fish habitats such as snags that were exposed due to the drawdown were damaged.