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County to consider Round Lake options Thursday

[Will LaBreche](#) / Staff Writer
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The county board on Thursday will hear four proposed recommendations concerning the Round Lake watershed which were finalized in a Round Lake planning meeting held last Thursday.

The four recommendations include: requesting a change to the 1941 Public Service Commission (PSC) order to reflect the natural variations of lake water levels; replace or modify the Carlson dam to accommodate proposed water levels; lower the Highway NN culverts to meet Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permit requirements; and to request that a feasibility study be completed by SEH Engineering in regard to the lowering of the NN culverts and the size and number of culverts necessary and what water level changes might occur with dam modification.

For the modification of the 1941 order, the DNR stated that the order, if altered, should reflect current lake levels to a range that is realistic to maintain under present conditions, which are different than they were in 1941.

As for the possible replacement of the Carlson dam, any changes to the existing structure, or the construction of a new dam altogether, would require an engineering plan and design to be submitted to the DNR for review.

An attorneys' meeting between Mike Cain of the DNR, Kris Goodwill of LCO, Jason Stark with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) and Mike Lutz, also of the DNR resulted in a consensus that the removal of beaver dams in the watershed would not be completed without the support of LCO in consultation with the Voight Task Force, which handles natural resource issues within tribal boundaries.

There was no resolution to the lowering of the NN culverts however, which LCO has stated will eliminate a wild ricing area. This appears to be the issue of contention for LCO, but an essential component to the overall plan for the watershed.

"It is the tribe's position that we do have jurisdiction over the reservation, whether it's land or water, and we have U.S. Supreme Court decisions to back that up that say if there's a threat to the tribe's health, safety or welfare, then we certainly do have that jurisdiction over anything within reservation boundaries," said Goodwill. She eluded to the fact that lowering the culverts could result in legal action.

"The potential is certainly there to go to federal court," she added, claiming that numerous supreme court cases are on record where tribes have successfully defended any detriment to natural resources within tribal boundaries.

A closer examination of lowering the NN culverts is needed, it seems, by all involved parties before any final conclusions can be drawn.

Frank Pratt of the DNR asserted that caution should be applied when considering what to do about the Carlson dam as well. He stated that any modification which would deprive downstream waters of sufficient flow to maintain levels would trigger a need for an environmental assessment (EA) in moving forward and perhaps even easements from those owning property on affected downstream waters.

County board chairman Hal Helwig, who attended Thursday's meeting at the request of moderator Shirley Riedmann, stated that the full board will likely be most concerned about the county's relationship with LCO. Which, at this point, is the issue of lowering the culverts.

It has been confirmed that the proposed recommendations are listed on the agenda for county board consideration this Thursday, Sept. 20, when more discussion will unquestionably take place.

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