



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



KEITH CREAGH
DIRECTOR

October 2, 2012

Mr. Richard Jakubiec
Isabella County Drain Commissioner
200 North Main
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

RE: PROPOSED MODIFICATION TO THE ORDER ESTABLISHING NORMAL WATER LEVEL OF LAKE ISABELLA AND AUTHORIZING WINTER DRAW-DOWN (CIRCUIT COURT ORDER DATED OCTOBER 25TH, 1982).

Dear Mr. Jakubiec

Thank you for the opportunity to meet to discuss the Lake Isabella Association's (Association) concerns regarding the refill dates for planned upcoming series of impoundment draw-downs. As we discussed at the meeting, Fisheries Division is amenable to working with the Association if the provisions we presented can be met. The current order determining the legal lake level for Lake Isabella says:

It is further ordered that the Isabella County Drain Commissioner shall take appropriate action to return the water level of Lake Isabella to its normal level of 895 feet above means sea level, such action to commence annual on or about March 15th, or at such time as the spring thaw occurs.

In addition, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Water Resources Division (MDEQ-WRD) Permit 11-37-0017-P requires the refill to begin no later than March 1.

During the meeting, the representatives from the Association presented their concerns regarding adhering to the March 15th date citing potential damage to shorelines from shifting ice as a primary concern.. To replace the March 15th date, but still adhere to the spirit of the lake level order (i.e., "...at such time as the spring thaw occurs...") to have the impoundment up to full pool, we propose the following:

1. The impoundment refill date would be subject to spring weather and dependent on water temperatures.
2. The refill rate shall not exceed 0.5 feet per day.

3. The impoundment will reach the normal pool elevation (895 feet above mean sea level) by the time water temperature as measured in the tailrace of the dam reaches 39°F.
4. The current requirement of a minimum flow during the refill period of 94 cubic feet per second to the Chippewa River should be maintained to protect aquatic resources in the river below Lake Isabella.

In order to verify these requirements are met, the Association would agree to

1. Provide the MDEQ-WRD, Saginaw Bay District Office, and MDNR Fisheries Southern Lake Huron Management Unit an annual report of the refill, to include water temperatures, water levels and dates all actions were taken.
2. Monitor the channel directly downstream of the apron of the dam for evidence of sediment accumulation due to sediment movement out of the impoundment into the channel below the dam during the draw downs.
3. If there is evidence of excessive sedimentation from the drawdown, the MDEQ-WRD Saginaw Bay District Office shall be contacted immediately to determine if additional measures will be required to limit sedimentation downstream from the dam to protect the downstream reaches of the Chippewa River.

At this point, MDNR Fisheries proposes that the draw down completion date remain as specified in the order as November 1st.

Justification:

The requirement to return the elevation of Lake Isabella back to full pool by the time the water temperature reaches 39°F, will protect important fishery resources. Several species of fish spawn early in the year commencing when water temperatures reach approximately 39°F, starting with northern Pike, and followed by walleye and yellow perch. Pike utilize shallow margins and vegetated ditches that would be dewatered during the proposed winter draw-down. By making sure the water is restored to normal pool by the time temperature is reached, these habitats will be available for northern pike spawning.

Additionally, this should assist the property owners in protecting their shoreline by timing the refill to a period where the ice is in a degraded condition and less likely to have the integrity to ride up onto the shoreline.

The MDEQ-WRD requires that any changes to Permit 11-37-0017-P, including the drawdown date and the change to refilling timing needs to be permitted by the MDEQ-WRD. If you require additional information please contact:

Kip Cronk
MDEQ Water Resources Division
Saginaw Bay District Office
401 Ketchum, Suite B
Bay City, MI 48708

If the proposed operational procedure is acceptable to your office after you have consulted with the Lake Isabella Property Owners and the Village of Lake Isabella, we ask that you prepare a short plan and identify the individuals that will be responsible for monitoring the conditions at the lake and in the river and those that will be in charge of making adjustments at the dam during the refill of Lake Isabella. This plan should be sent to Kip Cronk at the address above and indicate it is part of Permit 11-37-0017-P so it is added to the appropriate file.

Please let me know you have any questions or concerns regarding what I have proposed.

Sincerely



Kyle Kruger
Senior Fisheries Biologist
Habitat Management Unit
FISHERIES DIVISION
(989) 26-3211 x 7073

cc Tim Wolf, Village of Lake Isabella
George King, LIPOA, Lake Isabella
Carey Pauquette, Water Quality Specialist, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe
Dan Bock, AG's Office, Lansing
Kip Cronk, MDEQ, Bay City
Jim Baker, SLHMU, Fisheries, Bay City