

Monterey Dam to be removed

By Michelle Lovrine Honeyager
Special to the Lakes Edition

After a long deliberation and controversy, the Janesville City Council, at the end of March, voted to remove the Monterey Dam. The dam no longer serves the purpose of generating power that it was built for and ongoing costs to keep it open were deemed inefficient.

According to Tim Whittaker, Janesville City Stormwater Engineer, in mid-2017 the city is looking to apply for the DNR permit to abandon the dam. Project detailed design will then take place. In early 2018, the city will apply for a DNR Municipal Dam Grant, which can be up to \$400,000. The project bid process for renovations will begin sometime in 2018.

Why the dam has to go
According to the City of Janesville website, the dam was first built in the mid-1800s to provide hydroelectric power to local woolen mills. The dam hasn't had its hydroelectric equipment for decades now, and it hasn't provided power since the 1960s. It also doesn't hold back the Rock River from flooding.

In 2012, the dam was inspected by Bloom Companies and it was found that the dam has several structural problems. Some of those problems are deteriorating and missing concrete, spillway cracking and exposed steel. The city estimated that repair would have cost about \$700,000, while removal on restoration would cost \$1.1 million, with the DNR grant of \$400,000. Meaning removing the dam would cost the same as repairs, without the consequences of ongoing maintenance.

The City of Janesville applied for a DNR Municipal Dam Grant in 2014 for repairs. It was deemed a repair of a low hazard dam, and due to not scoring well, the grant was not approved. And by February 2015, bids for repair work on the dam were more than double the initial estimates (\$500,000 to \$800,000).

On top of that, removing the dam means returning the areas to a more natural state. Orig-



Janesville's Monterey Dam is scheduled for removal in early 2018. (Photo by Jason Francis)

inal habitats for fish, wildlife and vegetation will be restored. The oxygen level in the water is expected to increase. Removal of the dam could also return the upstream reach of the river to a more free-flowing state, which is conducive to young fish and species that prefer flowing water and gravel. It would more closely match other portions of the Rock River.

The most promising ideas for the area are plans for restoration. According to Whittaker, "In the space between the river walls in downtown Janesville, the river will drop five inches. The river will still go wall-to-wall. Farther down, closer to the dam, the elevations will drop approximately three feet."

So not only will the downtown area look basically the same, but the area close to the dam

opens up opportunities for recreational additions and beautification initiatives. Preliminary plans for the area include a canoe/kayak launch, more trails, picnic lawn, increasing fishing access and a stormwater pond.

Case for keeping the dam

Yet not everyone was happy at the prospect of getting rid of the dam. The City of Janesville's website even mentioned some cons to the removal. As a few of the major points, fish will no longer stack up downstream of the dam, making fishing less of an ease in that spot. Large, flat areas of water that have come to define the area will be lost, to the point where the water will be less visible from the road. While there will be no dam maintenance, there could be maintenance for the current bay area and

the added amenities.

The construction could also include short-term impacts, like sediment release downstream and disturbance near the actual construction.

The "Save the Monterey Dam" Facebook group states on their page, "Without the Monterey Dam, say goodbye to the Monterey Bay and say hello to a giant mud pit which will breed mosquitoes and harbor snakes, raccoons and river rats. The consultant (Inter-Fluve) has said this is a positive as that is returning to nature. In Wisconsin's 10th largest City? We need to stand together to protect Janesville's history."

Another concern was how the dam removal would affect the local historical site, The Rock. The only change is that the water's edge would be farther away from The Rock.



Going green

A green heron peers into a pond hoping for an opportunity to snag a fish or frog this spring in Janesville Township. About the size of crows and with stocky builds, green herons are at home along streams, rivers and ponds. (Photo by Jason Francis)

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