



FACT SHEET

Forestville Millpond Drawdown

What is a drawdown?

- A drawdown is a temporary lowering of pond levels by opening the gate at the Forestville dam on the Ahnapee River. The river will continue to flow during the drawdown, however water will no longer be impounded and create the lake while the gate is fully open. At the end of the drawdown the gate will be closed and the Millpond refilled to current levels.
- While the Millpond is drawn down the fishing pier will not be placed at the Forestville Dam County Park. The boat launch will be closed to trailer use. Visitors may be able to access the water by carrying in their own watercraft. Other park areas, including the playground, shelter, and Ahnapee Trail – etc. will remain open to visitors as usual.

When will the drawdown begin and end?

- The drawdown will begin November 1, 2019 with a gradual opening of the gate at the Forestville dam. Water levels will be lowered by no more than 3 inches a day to reduce downstream sedimentation and minimize impacts to aquatic animals.
- The drawdown will end September 1, 2021 with a gradual closing of the gate that will return water levels to current levels while maintaining at least 25% of the natural low flow of water downstream.
- Throughout the process Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources recommendations to reduce sediment loss and maintain continual flow rates will be closely followed.

Why is a drawdown needed?

A drawdown will improve the overall health and water quality within the Millpond. A 2017 analysis of conditions identified water depth of less than three feet in 92% of the waterbody, lack of abundance and diversity of native plants, a fish community dominated by carp, and poor water quality within the Millpond.

What are the expected benefits after the drawdown?

- Increased water depth due to compaction and oxidization of exposed sediments.
- Control of invasive aquatic plants (Eurasian watermilfoil and curly-leaf pondweed) and improved growth of desirable native aquatic plants.
- Reduced carp population.
- Improved water clarity due to compacted sediments and reduced carp population.

What impacts may there be on local fish and wildlife?

Fish populations will temporarily be impacted by the change in water levels during the drawdown. Fish populations typically rebound within 3 – 5 years after impoundments are refilled. Door County is coordinating with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to identify best methods to control carp and stock desirable fish species once the Millpond is refilled. Improved water quality, water depth, and native plant diversity following the drawdown will also benefit fish populations.

No significant or long-term impacts to local wildlife populations are expected as a result of the drawdown. New and temporary habitat for migratory shorebirds and wading birds may be provided by the exposed sediments. A temporary reduction in numbers of waterfowl, reptiles and amphibians is expected until the Millpond is refilled.

What else is Door County doing about water quality in the Millpond?

The Door County Soil & Water Conservation Department actively works with landowners to install conservation practices and prevent runoff from impacting water quality. In 2019 a draft watershed plan for the Upper Ahnapee River was developed to identify best management practices and funding sources to reduce nonpoint pollution in the watershed. Long-term efforts to improve water quality will continue throughout the drawdown and into the future.

What other management options were considered?

The drawdown was the logical and cost effective option to reduce invasive aquatic species, increase water depths, and reduce carp populations. Three other options to improve Millpond water quality were considered:

- Removal of the dam and returning the Ahnapee to a free flowing river
- Modifying the dam construction to release the water from the bottom
- Dredging the accumulated sediments from the Millpond

How did the county choose the drawdown option?

Stakeholders were invited to meet with regional natural resource experts to evaluate each potential option. Based on the study of conditions in the Millpond in 2017 and the stakeholder meetings, the Door County Soil and Water Conservation Department provided the drawdown recommendation for County Board approval. The other options were not selected for these reasons:

- Dam removal was likely to be strongly contested whereas the less permanent drawdown had not yet been used as a management option. Dam removal was identified as an otherwise feasible option based on availability of grant funds and the resulting long-term restoration of natural hydrologic conditions in the Ahnapee River.
- Modifying dam construction was not necessary and would not improve water quality in the Millpond. The dam can already be operated to temporarily release water from below the surface during high water levels. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources requires the dam be operated as it is currently with primary flow from the top to maintain water levels.
- Dredging would provide a short-term benefit at a great financial cost. Granting agencies contacted about this option stated that applications for dredging an impoundment are not likely to be prioritized for funding due to the short-term and limited ecological benefits offered by dredging. The cost estimate for dry dredging one foot of compacted sediments for the entire millpond at the end of a drawdown was \$2,000,000 (including transport and disposal at an approved site). The cost estimate for hydraulic dredging of two feet of loose sediment from entire millpond without a drawdown was \$7,000,000 (assuming a 20-40 acre dewatering site was located, permitted, and capped with long-term land use restrictions).

Where can I get more information?

Please see the Forestville Millpond Report 2018 - *Final Report dated June 2018 for the Comprehensive Lake Management Planning Grant Project #LPL162317* located here: <https://www.co.door.wi.gov/510/Forestville-Millpond>