



CHRIS ABELE, MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
JOHN DARGLE, JR., DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE

Date: October 14, 2014
To: Marina Dimitrijevic, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
From: John Dargle, Jr., Director, Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture
Subject: **Estabrook Dam Environmental Assessment – ACTION**

POLICY

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture (DPRC) is seeking direction on which alternative identified in the draft Environmental Assessment to pursue.

BACKGROUND

Milwaukee County is currently under an Administrative Order from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to repair or remove the Estabrook Dam by December 31, 2014. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has asserted they have jurisdiction of an island situated near the center of the dam structures and requested that the County prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) so that they can evaluate the appropriateness of proposed construction activities consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act. Permission to access the island is essential to either of the alternatives. The draft EA identifies and evaluates different alternatives and their implications for the area impacted by the Estabrook Dam. The draft EA is required prior to BLM granting the requested access.

In 2014, Milwaukee County and its engineering consultant AECOM organized and led a technical team tasked with compiling relevant information and preparing the draft EA. The team is comprised of knowledgeable representatives from DPRC, DAS Architecture and Engineering Division, AECOM, Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), WDNR, BLM, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

A Public Scoping Meeting was held on June 5, 2014 by the DPRC and its consultants to solicit ideas and input on potential alternatives for the dam. The public was asked to present any new alternatives that were not considered in the draft document and no new alternatives were identified. A Public Information Meeting was held on September 3, 2014 at Nicolet High School. The DPRC took this opportunity to summarize the draft EA, explain alternatives and why it is recommending removal of the dam. Attendees had an opportunity to provide comments on the draft EA. Public comments from these meetings along with comments from two on-line surveys, correspondence and other

stakeholder sources were collected and integrated into the draft EA. The BLM has directed the DPRC to specify one preferred alternative in the final EA submitted for their evaluation.

The DPRC has reviewed the alternatives and supporting information included in the draft EA and is seeking the concurrence of the County Board and County Executive with its recommendation of dam removal as the preferred option in the final EA that it submits to BLM in support of the request from the County for construction access.

DPRC recommends this alternative because it would result in these benefits:

- Capital savings of over \$844,000 compared to the previous alternative
- Require no annual operation and maintenance
- An operational budget savings of \$160,000 annually
- The present worth analysis indicates a \$3,460,000 savings over 20 years
- Eliminate the unwanted accumulation of sediments and debris upstream
- Restore the river to a more natural looking, free flowing condition
- Remove impediments to navigation and fish passage
- Eliminate upstream flooding impacts caused by the existing dam
- Lower river levels during floods more than the other options
- Improve public safety and reduce potential risks and liabilities
- Provide a more regular hydrologic condition for aquatic species
- Eliminate the operational and regulatory requirements of dam ownership

RECOMMENDATION

After careful review of all the alternatives identified and the supporting information included in the EA, the DPRC recommends that dam removal be the preferred alternative presented in the final EA that is submitted to the BLM. It is further recommended that if dam removal is approved that the DPRC is authorized to proceed with dam removal and that the DPRC is authorized to apply for or modify grant applications for financial assistance for the purpose of dam removal.

It is further recommended that the DPRC, the Department of Administrative Services, the County Comptroller, Risk Management, Corporation Counsel and Register of Deeds and other appropriate Milwaukee County staff be authorized to prepare, review, approve, execute, record all documents and to perform all actions required to facilitate removal of the Estabrook Dam and that the County Executive and County Clerk be authorized to execute any required documents.

Prepared by: Kevin Haley, Landscape Architect, Planning & Development Division

Recommended by:

Approved by:

Laura Schloesser, Chief of
Administration & External Affairs

John Dargle, Jr., Director

Attachment 1 - Draft Environmental Analysis Executive Summary and Attachment 1
Attachment 2 - Presentation to July 22, 2014 meeting of Parks, Energy & Environment
Committee

Link to Draft Environmental Analysis - <http://county.milwaukee.gov/EstabrookParkDam>

copy: County Executive Chris Abele

Raisa Koltun, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office

Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board

Sup. Gerry Broderick, Chair, Parks, Energy and Environment Committee

Sup. Khalif Rainey, Vice-Chair, Parks, Energy & Environment Committee

Erica Horton, Fiscal Mgt. Analyst, Admin & Fiscal Affairs/DAS

Scott Manske, Comptroller, Office of the Comptroller

Alexis Gassenhuber, Parks, Energy & Environment Committee Clerk

Jessica Janz-McKnight, Research and Policy Analyst, Office of the Comptroller

Sup. Theodore Lipscomb, District 1, County Board of Supervisors

Sup. Willie Johnson Jr., District 13, County Board of Supervisors

Steve Cady, Research Services Director, Office of the comptroller