



## MINONG FLOWAGE ASSOCIATION

### Minong Flowage Drawdown Update 10/6/2021

The drawdown started on schedule on September 20 and immediately was impacted by a heavy rainfall, which have been few and far between this year. A total of 1.38 inches was recorded on the north end of the flowage with heavier rains experienced to the east but still in the Totagatic River watershed. As a result, Renewable World Energy who is responsible for the operation of the dam had to adjust their drawdown plan and recover from the extra flow of water into the flowage. Last weekend (October 4/5), another rainfall of at least .95 inches was experienced, creating additional challenges to maintaining a consistent rate of reduction of the water levels.

As of 10/5, the water level has receded about 27 to 30 inches from normal levels, after 16 days of drawdown which is reasonably close to the desired rate of about 2 inches per day average. Many stumps have started to appear in the shallower north end of the flowage and everyone now has significant amounts of exposed shorelines. A few fishing boats are still being put in the water at the DNR landing, but that will likely not last much longer. The drawdown objective of reducing the water level by 60 inches by November 1 appears at this time to be on track. Property owners are encouraged to leave woody debris along their shorelines to preserve fish habitat and or consider enrolling in the DNR Fish Sticks program for which the Minong Flowage Association has a grant from the DNR. Contact Dan Maxwell ([dan.maxwell@comcast.net](mailto:dan.maxwell@comcast.net)) for more information.

There have been a few questions from property owners concerning the drawdown.

Who is conducting the drawdown?

The daily execution of the drawdown is being performed by Renewable World Energy who has a contract with Washburn County (owner of the dam) to operate the dam for purposes of power generation. The Washburn County Highway Department has responsibility for all dams owned by the county and the Minong Flowage Association is working closely with them to make sure the drawdown tracks the requirements specified by the Wisconsin DNR.

What are the drawdown requirements?

The primary requirement is to reduce the water level by 60 inches by November 1 in order to expose lakebed to winter freezing to kill the invasive Eurasian Water Milfoil. The desired drawdown rate is about 2 inches a day to allow for migration of fish and vertebra (turtles etc.) to follow the receding water. The Wisconsin DNR has said a reduction of water level of 6 inches in 24 hours is the maximum to be allowed and that the 60 inch reduction level must be met by November 1.

Why do we sometimes see water going over the dam and sometimes not?

The drawdown plan from Renewable World Energy is to conduct as much of the drawdown as possible using the turbine gates you can see on the left side of the dam when viewed from County Highway I. When using only the turbine gates, you will not see any water going over the dam. By using the turbine gates, Renewable World Energy can maximize power generation during the drawdown which is expected to create a credit in the overall power generation difference they will experience during the drawdown period. This is a good thing for Washburn County and the Minong Flowage Association as it should reduce the net costs involved with the drawdown. If heavy rains occur in NW Wisconsin, the additional influx of water into the flowage may require Renewable World Energy to utilize the other gates on the dam if that influx exceeds what amount of water that can go through the turbines and still maintain a receding water level. Renewable World Energy is monitoring the water levels during the drawdown and is making the decisions as to when to use the other gates on the dam in order to keep achieve the drawdown objectives. Washburn County Highway Department is providing oversight of the entire process.

How much Eurasian Water Milfoil was found in the flowage during the survey conducted this fall just prior to the start of the drawdown?

The survey done on September 19 showed 206 acres of EWM in the flowage. This number is the highest number surveyed in the Minong Flowage since the prior to the dam repair/drawdown that occurred in 2014. It also does not include the amount of EWM in the County Park bay accessible from the north shore of the park. That bay is reported to be filled with EWM. The MFA hopes to post on its website, in the near future, a map showing where EWM was found during the September survey.

Please visit the MFA website [www.minongflowage.org](http://www.minongflowage.org) for additional information and send any questions to [info@minongflowage.org](mailto:info@minongflowage.org)

**MFA Lake Management Committee**