

## **Pine Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District**

“Dedicated to preserve and protect the quality and beauty of Pine Lake”

April 22, 2021

Dear Pine Lake District Property Owners and Residents,

The Pine Lake District is continuing to work with the Town of Hiles on a project to replace the dam on Pine Lake. The new dam must be capable of holding summertime water levels at an elevation that is acceptable to all of you. 2021 will be a big year for this project, and the District and the Town are working on multiple different steps in this process.

The purpose of this letter is to communicate on 3 major projects that the Lake District Board is working on:

1. Working with the DNR to increase the current “water level order”.
2. Changing the Dam Design from a fixed crest dam to an adjustable/ controllable dam.
3. Transferring the ownership of the dam from the Town of Hiles to the Pine Lake District.

### **Current Water Level History/ Data**

The dam is subject to a “water level order” issued April 2, 1930 for the minimum water level and July 30, 1959 for the maximum water level. The current water level order requires the water level in the lake to be maintained within a one-foot range. This water level order is based on a “local datum” benchmark elevation; the minimum allowable water level is 90.0 feet and the maximum water level was set at 91.0. The gauge installed on the dam abutment shows a reading of 0.00 which corresponds with 90.0 feet and a reading of 1.00 corresponds with 91.0 feet. The Town of Hiles, as the owner of the dam, is required by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (“DNR”) to use best efforts to keep the lake’s water levels between this one-foot range in elevation.

Thanks to the research conducted by the District’s engineer, Tiffiney Kleczewski from Flambeau Engineering, the District has learned that the water levels in Pine Lake fluctuate significantly throughout the year. The natural seasonal high water level (March, April, May) of Pine Lake is significantly higher than the maximum water level in the current order. In the past, the inability of the Town of Hiles to keep water levels below the permissible maximum has not been because of mismanagement of the dam but is because of the natural seasonal water flow through Pine Lake.

This new understanding of the natural hydrology of Pine Lake is great news for this project. It means that some of the more difficult obstacles that apply to obtaining DNR approval for increased water levels for most lakes are not applicable here.

### **Increase of the Current Lake Level Order**

The Lake District and the Town of Hiles have had multiple meetings and discussions over the last few months about how to move forward with this project. Earlier this year, the Town took steps to put the dam replacement and bridge replacement projects on hold until more information can be developed. The District has already contacted the DNR to get preliminary feedback from their resource managers regarding the possibility of raising the water level order by approximately six inches. This would result in typical summertime water levels being approximately where they were in the summer of 2020 (the water level of the lake hovered a few inches higher than the permissible water level for most of the boating season). As many of you know, the District attempted to contact every resident and property owner around the lake in the summer of 2020, and we learned that there was near-unanimous support for this slightly higher water level.

### **Changing the Dam Design from a Fixed Crest Dam to an Adjustable/ Controllable Dam**

If we are successful in getting the DNR to approve an increase in the lake level order, the new dam must be designed to operate at a higher water level than the original fixed-crest dam that was designed for this project. It has also been determined that the dam design must include a controllable gate structure. This will allow for higher water levels in the summer along with lower water levels in the winter to help to avoid ice damage to shorelines. The Town of Hiles’ engineering firm is currently working on some different design

options for dams that could accomplish this. This type of dam is far more expensive to build than the originally proposed fixed-crest dam, but it is clearly needed if these goals are to be accomplished.

One benefit of the Town putting the dam project on hold is that it will be possible to apply a second time for a state grant which could cover up to 50% of the costs of construction of the dam (the Town was unsuccessful in obtaining a grant in the previous two-year grant cycle).

### **Dam Ownership Transfer from the Town of Hiles to the Lake District Membership**

The Town and the Lake District Board agree that the best path forward at this time is for the District to take over ownership and maintenance responsibilities for the dam from the Town. The transfer of ownership is dependent upon the approval of the Lake District membership at our annual or a special meeting. The Town and the District have also agreed to splitting the cost of the new dam if this transfer occurs. There are many benefits to the District in taking over the responsibility for the dam, including:

1. Ownership will give the District control over how water levels are managed on the Lake throughout the year (within order levels).
2. Ownership of the dam will allow the District to manage the process of seeking approval for an increase in the water level order elevation through the DNR process and to manage the application for a dam grant.

### **Next Steps**

Over the next few months, the District will be:

1. Evaluating dam design options for an Adjustable / Controllable Dam Design
2. Preparing the necessary information to submit to the DNR for the proposed water level order change.
3. Preparing the information and approvals (Lake District Members and DNR) for the transfer of the ownership of the dam from the Town of Hiles to the Pine Lake District.
4. Reaching out to the few property owners who expressed some concerns about higher water levels, to better understand their position.

We will keep you informed about all of these activities and will mail a notice to you for the meeting at which the District will vote on taking over ownership of the dam.

Thank you,  
Pine Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District Board of Directors

### **2021 Meeting Schedule (all meetings start at 8:00 a.m. in Hiles Town Hall)**

Thursday, April 29 – Special Meeting

Saturday, May 29 - Quarterly Meeting

Saturday, July 3 (includes Annual and Quarterly Meeting)

Saturday, September 4 - Quarterly Meeting

\*Additional special meetings may also be scheduled as needed. We encourage you to visit the Town of Hiles website at [www.townofhiles.org](http://www.townofhiles.org) for meeting information. Also visit the Lake District website at [www.pinelakedistrict.org](http://www.pinelakedistrict.org) for meeting information and updates.

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Attention: we are working on updating our database for property owners. Please help us by providing your contact information to: **Pine Lake District, P.O. Box 254, Argonne, Wi. 54511** or **emailing** your information to: [pinelakeinfo@gmail.com](mailto:pinelakeinfo@gmail.com). Please include your name, permanent address, Hiles property address, phone number(s), and email address.