

WHITE BEAR LAKE

Council probing details of pricey plan to fill up lake

The idea of filling up White Bear Lake with water piped in from the Mississippi River raised a number of concerns last week at the City Council meeting.

"This is a tremendous environmental issue," Council Member Kevin Edberg told colleagues as they sorted out the implications. "We have pure water in that public lake and we don't want algae blooms [from river water]. If we screw that up, we will have committed a massive sin."

The council was reacting to a report from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and commissioned by the Legislature that placed the upfront cost of augmenting the depleted lake at roughly \$50 million to \$100 million.

Among the questions: who would pay for ongoing operations, oversee the project and pick up the bill even if the state helped with initial costs.

Said Council Member Doug Biehn: "This didn't start happening until outer suburbs, the Woodburys and Lino Lakes, started developing. ... The cost should be shared."

Members of the local group pushing the project, including lake owners, have said it's doubtful anything will happen unless costs can be reduced.

DAVID PETERSON