

Friends group: Lake restoration long overdue

The recent guest editorial from the Friends of the Mississippi River, letters to the editor, and quotes from local elected officials miss some important facts. White Bear Lake water levels have been down for approximately 12 years and what we used to refer to as Ramsey County Beach has been closed for nine years. It is beyond time for specific actions to be taken to restore White Bear Lake to its historical levels for the enjoyment of current and future generations. We must remember that White Bear Lake is truly a regional asset that has always been used by residents from far beyond the local communities.

White Bear Lake was augmented for several decades by wells on the western shore. This augmentation kept our lake level relatively constant. Augmentation from groundwater wells was stopped by the DNR under state law in 1978. Since that time local governments as well as the DNR approved the augmentation of Gilfillan Lake in North Oaks and Snail Lake in Shoreview with water from the Mississippi

through the St. Paul Regional Water System. The augmentation of these nearby lakes was highly successful and restored water levels in both lakes in just a couple years. These augmentation systems have not operated in recent years because of abundant rainfall. A simple extrapolation from the actual annual operating costs from these augmentation systems shows the likely operating cost for augmenting White Bear Lake is \$250,000 per year, not the \$500,000 to \$4 million per year from the DNR estimate. Similarly, a simple extrapolation of the actual capital investment for these two augmentation systems indicates a White Bear Lake augmentation system could be built for a fraction of the DNR cost estimate.

The Friends of White Bear Lake have obtained a second construction cost estimate for the augmentation



Movers and Shakers
Mike Downing

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of White Bear Lake from Emmons & Olivier Resources (EOR), which is a major environmental engineering company in Minnesota. EOR is very aware of the need to maintain the water quality in White Bear Lake. The EOR capital cost estimate ranged from \$26 to \$38 million, less than half of DNR cost estimate. Additionally, the operating cost estimate is in the \$200,000 to \$300,000 per year range. Both the capital cost and operating costs could be further reduced if the augmentation system was resized to 1 billion gallons of water per year from the current 2 billion gallons of water per year. (Please note 1 billion gallons of water is equivalent to 1 foot of water

in White Bear Lake.) Remember, whatever water is put in White Bear Lake either raises the water level or recharges the underlying aquifer.

The St. Paul Regional Water System has over 7 billion gallons of additional capacity in their chain of lakes drawing off the Mississippi River. The water quality in this system is closely monitored and any water put into White Bear Lake would be of equal or better quality.

It is time to do something for our children and grandchildren in this region to ensure that they too will be able to enjoy White Bear Lake. Count us in the "do something" group of concerned citizens in the White Bear Lake area rather than the "do-nothing" group.

For more information refer to:
<http://www.fowbl.org/>

Mike Downing has lived in White Bear Lake since 1974, been a member of the original "ad hoc" WBL water level group, member of the LLRC of the WBLCD and board member of the Friends of WBL.