

Coon Rapids Dam pool to be raised this winter; property owners and recreationists should be on alert

Asian carp pose a significant threat to aquatic habitat in the Mississippi River, so the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will be requesting the Three Rivers Park District to raise the water level in the pool behind the Coon Rapids Dam this winter to make it a more effective fish barrier.

Property owners along the pool should immediately begin to remove any docks and boat lifts from their shoreline that could be damaged by the higher water levels. Winter recreationists should be on alert, because ice conditions in the pool will be unpredictable for the rest of the winter.

The DNR recently met with representatives of the park district, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Weather Service and several local residents and community representatives, to discuss how to raise the pool in a safe manner to minimize damage to the shoreline and the danger to wintertime recreationists.

The DNR was advised to raise the pool slowly (no more than 6 inches per day) and to do it when open water is visible in the center of most of the pool. DNR and park district staff will monitor ice conditions on the reservoir, and as soon as the conditions are right will begin raising the pool.

DNR hydrologists do not believe this change in dam operations will affect overall peak flood levels along the pool. The Coon Rapids Dam pool does not contain enough storage to lessen flood levels. The water level of the pool when a flood starts does not make any difference in the severity of flooding.

DNR will begin reconstruction of the dam to make it a more effective Asian carp barrier either late this fall or early next year. The Three Rivers Park District and the DNR recently signed a joint powers agreement which paves the way for the dam reconstruction project.

Last year, the Legislature provided \$16 million for the project. DNR will be replacing the gate system and making other badly needed repairs. DNR will keep the pool level at or near the normal summer pool level all year long in the future.

DNR NEWS - JANUARY 31, 2012