

1 2020 RES-102
2 MANAGEMENT OF THE YAHARA CHAIN OF LAKES TO BALANCE FLOODING
3 RISKS, NAVIGATIONAL PURPOSES AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES
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5 The Yahara Watershed covers a quarter of Dane County and connects Lakes Mendota,
6 Monona, Waubesa, and Kegonsa. Each lake has a minimum and maximum target lake level
7 goal, managed by Dane County, set in accordance with Wisconsin Department of Natural
8 Resources.

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10 In the summer of 2018, large amounts of rainfall and inefficient movement of water out of the
11 system led to flooding in communities surrounding the Yahara chain of lakes. Similar flood
12 events occurred in 1993, 2000, and 2008.

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14 In October of 2018, the Dane County Board of Supervisors adopted [2018 Res-227](#),
15 ESTABLISHING A TECHNICAL WORK GROUP TO ADDRESS RECENT FLOODING IN THE
16 YAHARA CHAIN OF LAKES, which called for convening a technical work group to “evaluate
17 lake level conditions, model various scenarios that include predicted climate changes, identify
18 short- and long-term approaches to improve resiliency” and forming a task force to “review the
19 findings of the technical work group and make policy recommendations.” Additionally, the target
20 ranges established by the Dane County Lake Level Management Guide for the Yahara Chain of
21 Lakes were temporarily suspended with the directive that “Dane County will continue to
22 implement any tools that may be available to lower lake levels to DNR designated minimum
23 levels as soon as possible and work to maintain lakes at that level” until further action is
24 taken. This was also a short-term recommendation by the task force, while the technical work
25 group did not weigh in on this management approach.

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27 There are several challenges with moving water efficiently through the Yahara chain of lakes;
28 they include: the relatively minimal slope through the chain, constriction points along the way
29 and aquatic plants, which cause friction and reduce water flow.

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31 On May 28, 2020, the Environment, Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee and Lakes &
32 Watershed Commission held a joint meeting. At the meeting, the quarterly report presentation
33 by department staff presented updates on progress made toward the task force
34 recommendations. It was noted in the report that 2019 actually had less days within the
35 minimum and maximum target range for lake levels than the flood year of 2018 and that
36 management scenarios for summer operations, with respect to potential rain events, varied little
37 between trying to manage towards the minimum versus managing towards the median of the
38 summer targets.

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40 The Environment, Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee, the committee of jurisdiction,
41 has had three Quarterly Report Presentations since the task force made their policy
42 recommendations and reviewed the lake levels.

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44 NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Land Conservation Committee, Environment,
45 Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee and the Lakes & Watershed Commission, through
46 their charge from the Dane County Board, review and make recommendations on lake
47 management, wish to express confidence in the lake level management and progress in
48 improvements of water flow through the Yahara chain of lakes that the Dane County Land &
49 Water Resources Department is implementing.

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51 BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED that the Dane County Board recognizes that the Yahara Chain of
52 Lakes offer different users a variety of enjoyment on individual lakes and differing needs and
53 expectations that need to balance the risk of future flooding with navigational purposes and
54 recreational activities.

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56 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED the temporary suspension of normal summer management,
57 established by the Dane County Lake Level Management Guide for the Yahara Chain of Lakes ,
58 and altered by [2018 Res-227](#) is rescinded so that adjustments are made to manage the lake
59 levels to the middle of the summer range.