

# Lake George Project History / Summary

In 1991, the City of River Falls, in cooperation with the Wisconsin DNR, UW-RF, and Trout Unlimited began drafting a Watershed Management Plan for the Kinnickinnic River and Its Tributaries with a single objective: "To aid in preparation of an action plan to minimize adverse water quality impacts from existing and future storm water discharges to the Kinnickinnic River."



The Plan was completed and adopted by the City of River Falls in 1995. This "action plan" identified river water quality issues associated with Lake George and the highly impervious watersheds in the down-town River Falls area. In 1996, UW-RF prepared a Lake George Management Plan for the City. This plan considered four alternatives:

- I. Do Nothing Option
- II. Dam Removal
- III. Complete Dredging
- IV. Constructed Artificial Wetland/ Stream Channeling

This study concluded that: After extensive study, considerable discussion with DNR personnel and others, Alternative IV is the recommended alternative as a management plan for Lake George, however, no scientific studies or modeling were conducted to determine the practicality or feasibility of this alternative.

In 2002, a grant was obtained from the DNR to help fund a scientific study of reconfiguring Lake George to enhance water quality of the Kinnickinnic River. The scope of this project was to analyze options for reconfiguring Lake George to provide improved storm water management of runoff from the highly-impervious downtown area of the City of River Falls. Only reconfiguration concepts that were viable with or without the dam in place were considered.

Bonestroo and Associates were retained for this project. Two models were developed to aid in technical evaluation of various alternatives. A thermal model for the river helps quantify the thermal impacts of various management alternatives, and an urban runoff model helps quantify total suspended solids loads to the river. In addition a 7-member Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and an 11-member Stakeholder Committee helped provide guidance for this project. These groups held 14 meetings between March 2003 and December 2004 to guide the development of this plan.

The critical elements endorsed by the TAC and Stakeholders Committee are as follows:

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1. Reconfigure Lake George into a multi-cell system separated from the river during base flow and small to moderate runoff events.
2. Construct the east interceptor (which includes capturing runoff from Econo Foods) as well as the first phase of the north interceptor up to Walnut Street.
3. Extend the north interceptor as opportunities arise, such as during downtown redevelopment projects or road/alley reconstruction.
4. Construct one or more "end-of-pipe" projects designed to infiltrate runoff on existing City-owned land, such as in Heritage Park on the west side of the river.
5. Concentrate on one (or several) storm drainage sewer shed to work with private property owners to find suitable sites for, and install, small scale storm water treatment features such as rainwater gardens. These efforts could focus on parts of the study area where diverting runoff to a reconfigured Lake George for treatment is not feasible (such as the west side neighborhoods), end-of-the-pipe treatment strategies may not be practical, or neighborhood interest and cooperation may be very high.
6. Develop and execute a public education program aimed at building understanding of and support for the overall management strategy and its various components among the general public as well as the business community.

On August 30, 2005, the Final Report of the Lake George Area Storm Water Treatment Concept Plan was presented to Stakeholders, TAC, Park Board, Plan Commission, and City Council. The Plan was well received by all in attendance, and City staff was encouraged to pursue funding opportunities for implementing the Plan.

Because storm water flowing to Lake George from the Westside neighborhoods cannot be routed through a reconfigured Lake George, the TAC and Stakeholders recommended small-scale/small site watershed management strategies such as rain gardens and infiltration trenches be implemented in the Westside neighborhood. In 2006 the City, in conjunction with TU, KRLT, and Priority Watershed, have targeted a storm sewer shed to implement these small scale practices. We have met with residents as well as hired a consultant to design City projects within the right of way. Preliminarily, 4 households will be implementing recommended projects on their property to treat roof and driveway runoff and the City will be constructing 5 projects within the public right of way to capture street and alley runoff. These projects will likely be constructed in 2007.

**Of the six critical elements endorsed by the TAC and Stakeholders Committee, elements 4-6 are currently being pursued through a combination of local and Priority Watershed funding. Funding necessary to implement elements 1-2 has not been secured. The EPA Targeted Watersheds Grant Program has been the only grant funding identified to date that may help make full implementation all six critical elements endorsed by the TAC and Stakeholders Committee a reality.**

**On August 28, 2007, the City of River Falls was officially notified by the EPA that our application for a Targeted Watersheds Grant was rejected.**