

# Shopiere Dam's future is on the line

A sponsor has come forward, but DNR is talking demolition

**By Ryan Amundson**  
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SHOPIERE \_ A relic situated on Turtle Creek since the 1840s is in danger of being torn down.

The proposed demolition of the Shopiere Dam will be discussed at an open house at the Turtle Town Hall from 4:30-7 p.m. on March 1.

Sue Josheff, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Rock River basin engineer, said a number of people will be on hand to talk to concerned citizens about the dam. An official from the Town of Turtle will staff the meeting, as well as an official from Rock County, a representative from Friends of the Shopiere Dam, a dam safety engineer and a fish biologist.

“They’ll be discussing the DNR’s intention to remove the dam,” said Josheff.

The dam is slated for removal this year, however, no date has been set. The schedule will depend on spring and summer weather.

Despite the planned removal, an all-out effort is being made by citizens, not only in the Beloit area, but also by one former Shopiere resident living in Bethesda, Md.

Terry Lierman, owner of two companies that distribute pharmaceuticals in Washington D.C., has pledged \$75,000 for the preservation of the historic landmark.

“I was born in Beloit, raised in Shopiere and spent an incredible amount of time at the dam during my childhood,” said Lierman. “It’s an incredible place of beauty.”

Lierman said his family and friends have kept him abreast of the situation.

“I have family back there. I went to the University of Wisconsin. I have a lot of friends in the area, a lot of ties,” he said.

Lierman said he has been lucky in life and felt this was a good opportunity to give back to the area.

“This was an opportunity to step to the plate and keep it going,” he said.

Nancy Steffensen, vice president of Friends of the Shopiere Dam, said the area would not be the same without the dam.

“Without Shopiere Dam it wouldn’t be Shopiere,” she said. “I’d just be devastated if they take it down.”

Steffensen's organization has asked for funding for an engineering study that needs to be done. She said the group needs some more time before a final decision to remove the dam is made.

``We're not at all happy," she said. ``We need a little more time."

Removal is pending, partially because there is no owner to hold responsible for improving the structure. The last owner moved out of Wisconsin in the early 1970s \_ presenting a problem for those who want to preserve the dam.

``At this point, I don't know of any responsible owner," said Josheff. ``No owner has come forward. We will continue to proceed with plans to remove the dam."

Jim Brandenburg, Town of Turtle chair, said the town board is neutral on the dam's fate.

``We have no jurisdiction over the dam," he said. ``We're not opposed to closing the dam. We're not for closing the dam."

In February of last year, Brandenburg said the town board voted not to accept ownership of the 150 year old dam.

``We can't take control of the liability issues," he said.

The Rock County Board of Supervisors has also avoided taking over the dam.

``We made clear that we would not take ownership," said County Administrator Craig Knutson.

Josheff agrees that dam ownership carries some risk with it.

``The dam is currently a safety hazard and a liability without a responsible owner," she said.

``The north abutment has water leaking through," said Josheff. ``This has caused rocks to break off. Water has scoured a hole. The hole has eroded back up under the structure. The embankment is eroded. It should be level, smooth, maintained."

The lack of an owner has put a strain on the county's tax roll as well.

``Shopiere dam has been tax delinquent for literally decades," said Knutson.

Repair of the damages would come at a cost of \$251,000. Removing the dam would cost the DNR \$100,000.

<http://www.beloitdailynews.com/299/shop17.htm>