

Turtle Lake and Long Lake Highwater Outlet Project

Aquatic Invasive Species Update

Background

In 1999, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) constructed a series of siphons to address highwater on Turtle Lake. Turtle Lake outlet siphon discharges highwater from Turtle Lake south into Long Lake and the Long Lake siphon discharges highwater west to a series of wetlands and streams. The siphon system has done a good job of managing water levels on the lakes for the last 20-plus years.

Discovery of Zebra Mussels

In the summer of 2021, zebra mussels were discovered in Turtle Lake. On February 17, 2022, BRRWD received letter from Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) stating that water cannot be discharged from Turtle Lake due to the discovery of zebra mussels. In order to resume discharge from Turtle Lake to Long Lake, BRRWD will need to amend the Public Waters Permit. Since zebra mussels have not been discovered in Long Lake, that system can and will continue to operate, as needed.

Next Steps

BRRWD and Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI) staff met with DNR staff to determine options to resume discharging from Turtle Lake. The first step is to amend the Public Waters Permit. At their March 14, 2022 Board Meeting, Board of Managers authorized HEI to work with DNR to amend the Permit. A revised Operation and Maintenance Plan was submitted to DNR on March 28, 2022. BRRWD continues to monitor lake levels on Turtle Lake and Long Lake and will continue to run the Long Lake siphon as needed. Prior to February 17, 2022, operation of the individual siphons could begin anytime the lake elevations exceed their drawdown elevation. As of March 11, 2022, Turtle Lake was below its permitted drawdown elevation so operation would not be allowed. Long Lake was slightly above its drawdown elevation, so that siphon can and will be operated this spring.

In the long term, BRRWD is looking into options on how to manage the restrictions due to the presence of zebra mussels while also continuing to manage water levels. BRRWD is investigating funding opportunities through the State in an attempt to reduce local cost.



If you have any questions, please contact the BRRWD office at 218-789-3100.

