

Pontoon Alley

3 hrs ·

From WLA today:

Oct. 12, 2018: As you know, Sanford, Wixom, Smallwood and Secord Lakes (the “Lakes”) were drawn down for FERC-mandated spillway inspections. FERC is the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which licenses and regulates hydroelectric dams in the USA. The drawdowns ranged from roughly one foot at Secord Lake to nearly five feet at Wixom Lake. During the drawdown process, FERC finalized the revocation of the Edenville hydropower license, and inspected the spillway structures on Sanford, Smallwood and Secord dams. Now that the inspections are complete, we are expecting at least some of the lakes will refill to normal summer levels. The rainy October we are experiencing will help that refilling process.

As we watch the lakes refill, do not be surprised if Wixom Lake does not refill like the other three lakes. The water levels of Sanford, Smallwood and Secord Lakes are specified by the FERC licenses in effect on those lakes. The water level in Wixom Lake was specified in its FERC license, but that license was revoked September 25, 2018. There are appeals and rehearing requests in progress in an effort to reverse the revocation. However, there is no current Federal or State regulation specifying the water level in Wixom Lake. This means that, for now, the Wixom Lake water level will be controlled where the Edenville Dam owner chooses and the DEQ and DNR permit. The Wixom Lake water level may return to historic “normal” levels, but it is more likely to remain at the current lower level or be taken down even further until a State lake level order is issued. Unfortunately, a few Wixom Lake property owners didn’t get their boats and lifts out of the water before the drawdowns began. We hope they are able to get help from lake service companies or someone else to remove their equipment before winter.

Wixom Lake Association has representatives on the Four Lakes Task Force, which is working to enact Michigan Part 307 Lake Level Orders (LLO) for all the Lakes. That work began in February, 2018 when the Edenville Dam license was first threatened with revocation. If we are successful in getting an LLO for Wixom Lake, the order will specify a lake level very similar to the level specified in the FERC license and Wixom Lake will return to the levels we all want to see.

Hundreds of Michigan lakes are controlled by LLO’s and have been for decades. A Michigan Part 307 Lake Level Order is issued by a Michigan County Circuit Court following a lot of hard work to meet documentation requirements for issuing such an order. The work is underway by the Four Lakes Task Force, and requires engineers and attorneys, who both charge fees. They expect to bring the case to a Circuit Court late in 2018. If we are successful, there will be LLO’s for Sanford, Wixom, Smallwood and Secord Lakes before the spring runoff of 2019. In the meantime, we urge the Wixom Lake community to do two things:

1. Be patient and know people are working hard to preserve Wixom Lake.
2. Join Wixom Lake Association and encourage everyone who cares about Wixom Lake to do the same. Membership dues and donations help us fund the work that is ahead of us. If you wish, you may donate additional money to our effort. Wixom Lake Association is a 501(c) (3) corporation, so donations and membership dues may be deductible on your Federal income taxes. You may apply for membership here:

<https://www.wixomlakeassociation.org>