



# SECORD LAKE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## AUGUST 2020

### **Secord Lake Owners,**

All of us now know firsthand the devastation that results when a dam fails. The Edenville and Sanford lake communities will be living with that devastation for a very long time. Secord and Smallwood were more fortunate, but there is work to do. Indeed, all four lake communities now have the opportunity to develop and implement plans to repair our dams so they will be safe for generations to come. This is why Secord Lake Association supports the mission of the Four Lakes Task Force to bring back the four lakes as safely and quickly as possible. This support is reinforced by the continued commitment to the FLTF by the Commissioners of Gladwin and Midland Counties after the events of May 19.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is the federal agency that regulates and controls Secord Dam, and the decision to raise the lake level rests solely with FERC. On July 21, FERC filed its response to the inspection of Secord Dam it had ordered following the events of May 19. This letter can be viewed at the FERC e-library ([elibrary.ferc.gov](http://elibrary.ferc.gov), docket #P-10809). It provides no support for Boyce Hydro's claim that Secord Dam can be repaired for \$30,000 in August.

Specifically, in this letter, FERC:

- Lists 21 items that will require additional detailed inspections, underwater inspections, field surveys of the post-flood conditions and new stability analyses for any civil features that have changed from the pre-flood conditions. Nine of the items deal with the embankments and seven pertain to the spillway and associated concrete structures.
- Summarizes 12 recommended follow-up action items. One item, concrete repair is listed as "critical." Five of the items are "recommended actions," and six are "non-critical maintenance."
- Directs Boyce to submit a supplemental engineering report by August 20, 2020.
- Explicitly states that Secord Dam, in its present condition, cannot pass its Potential Maximum Flood (PMF), a current dam design and safety criterion.
- Concludes by cautioning that "The reservoir cannot be returned to normal levels until you receive authorization from FERC and unless all of the outstanding dam safety items are satisfactorily addressed."

At the request of FLTF, engineering company GEI Consultants of Michigan, P.C. has provided planning opinions of probable construction costs for Secord Dam. This estimate is \$24,000,000, which includes repair of all the items listed in the letter above, as well as the field work and engineering components, and other additional repairs and upgrades. It should be obvious that no one can bring back Secord Lake for \$30,000 this year.

Due to years of neglect and inadequate investment, our dam is now close to its end of life unless major improvements and repairs are made. This cannot be fixed with a fanciful plan to put a \$30,000 band-aid on our dam, nor can the safety and longevity of our dam be accomplished this year. We can look back and wish the private owners had properly cared for our dam, but the reality is they did not. The private ownership structure is not sustainable. We must acquire ownership and invest in our future.

We do understand concerns about the uncertainties that will exist until ownership is no longer in the hands of private parties. We have made efforts to address your concerns and answer your questions, and we will endeavor to continue to do so. We understand that the answers are not what you might like to hear. Out of respect for you and for the work that must be done, the answers we give are based only on what we know at the time we respond. We do not want to make promises so we can just move on and then disappoint you in the future.

#### **Some of the most frequently addressed concerns and questions are:**

**Will Secord be on a separate engineering and construction path? Yes.** We plan to start all engineering at the same time for all dams. Construction will follow after engineering. Smallwood and Secord will very likely start repairs before Sanford and Edenville start reconstruction

- Right now, if we can put all the financing together, we feel that Secord will be repaired around the end of 2023, but it is realistic to expect it could take longer.

#### **Who is paying for all of this? Eventually the lake property owners, but only after all efforts to find alternative funding have been exhausted.**

- **FLTF will continue to fund** the next two years with donations and grants. We know this is a challenging time for the lake communities, and no assessments will be levied during this planning time.
- The Secord Lake community **will not pay** for the engineering and construction of other dams or lakes. There are administrative and other similar costs that will be shared to keep costs lower for all the lakes.
- Special assessments on Secord will be determined based on the costs to repair and operate Secord Dam. They will be reviewed in the community, and individuals will have the opportunity to individually appeal. The final assessment roll must then be approved by the County. This will likely happen after 2021.

#### **What will the annual assessment cost for Secord be? We do not have an answer at this time.**

- We know that is not a satisfactory answer. We also know that many on the lake thought \$350/year was too high. It will likely not be lower than that number, and we understand that it cannot be significantly higher for many people on the lake.
- We will know more by the end of the year and will share a range with you. We understand it needs to be affordable! If it is not, we must work together to find other sources of funds, and FLTF is actively doing so.

**Are their major repairs on Secord? Yes.**

- GEI Consulting provided an early opinion of engineering, contingency and construction costs to be \$24 million (this with -30%/+50% confidence). This report is on the FLTF website under Documents/Engineering Documents.
- The numbers Boyce Hydro has quoted are based on fixing one item and do not include the costs for a new spillway or other necessary repairs.

**What does FERC say about costs? *FERC does not do the cost estimate, but as we look at the FERC July 21st letter, we see a few areas of focus.***

- Given FERC's focus on the embankments and the fact that the construction of the Secord earth embankments is similar to the Edenville embankments that failed, the Secord embankments will likely have to be reconstructed to meet current design criteria. The GEI report estimates this work will cost approximately **\$6 million**
- FERC also focuses on the condition of the concrete spillway and associated structures. These structures are nearly 100years old, in deteriorated condition and at the end of their useful life.
- The GEI report estimates the cost to rehabilitate the concrete spillway and spillway gates to provide a 75-year service life to be over **\$3 million**.
- The GEI report estimates approximately \$3 million to meet Michigan's 1/2 PMF requirement. The cost to meet FERC's requirement of 100% PMF would be significantly higher. The GEI estimates are for direct costs only. They do not include site prep, cofferdams, engineering, construction management or contingency.
- These costs total \$12 million. The remaining \$12 million is needed for multiple additional repairs and upgrades not specifically mentioned in FERC's letter, plus the cost to mobilize and demobilize to work on the dam.

**Can the lakes come up before all the repairs are completed? *Maybe. FLTF is still in fact-finding mode, with no assistance from Boyce.***

- The July 21st FERC letter requires interim measures to reduce risks until sufficient spillway capacity is added. These interim measures oftentimes involve operational restrictions which could affect water levels in the reservoir.
- Once the Counties have gained control of the dams and bottomlands and have performed some initial repairs, there may be some safe mode of dam operation that would allow the water to be raised while planning and engineering proceed.
- But to be clear, safety will be the number one priority of FLTF; we know that you and your families would expect nothing less.

Secord Lake Association (SLA) strongly believes that with the support of the FLTF, the Secord Lake community, Gladwin County, the three townships, and this Lake Association, WE WILL BRING SECORD LAKE BACK, safely and as quickly as possible. To become a member of the SLA, please visit our website at:

[www.secordlakeassociation.org](http://www.secordlakeassociation.org) and click on the membership link. If you have ideas, questions, or concerns, please reach out to us on our website at: [www.secordlakeassociation.org](http://www.secordlakeassociation.org) or by contacting one of the Board members personally.

Sincerely,  
Secord Lake Association

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&  
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The following businesses and individuals have proudly supported the Secord Lake Association and have sponsored the organization by funding a portion of this important newsletter. We appreciate their ongoing support.

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**SLA Membership Information**

To join the Secord Lake Association, visit the SLA website at: [www.secordlakeassociation.org](http://www.secordlakeassociation.org) and click on the membership link.

A one (1) year membership is \$25 or \$100 for a five (5) year membership.

Membership fee is for one (1) individual and entitles that individual to all membership rights and privileges included but not limited to voting rights.

**HOW TO FIND THE SLA**

Website: [www.secordlakeassociation.org](http://www.secordlakeassociation.org)  
Facebook: [secordlakeassociation](https://www.facebook.com/secordlakeassociation)  
Email: [secordlakeassociation@gmail.com](mailto:secordlakeassociation@gmail.com)  
P.O. Box 176, Gladwin, MI 48624

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