

Meeting Minutes
Rock River contact group field visit to observe river conditions
June 13, 2024

The group met from 9 AM until about 1 PM. We assembled at the Town of Ixonia Town Hall and then toured several areas to observe flooding conditions, then returned to the town hall for a discussion of observations and potential actions. Attached to these minutes are several handouts on watershed monitoring points, recent rainfall and flood conditions handed out by Rob Montgomery. Thank you, town chairman Perry Goetsch, for supplying a tasty lunch at the town hall.

Attendees

Perry Goetsch, Town of Ixonia town chair
Greg Fredrick, Town of Lebanon town chair
Barbara Dittrich, State Assembly representative, 38th district
Todd Tessmann, Utility Manager, Village of Hustisford, operator of Hustisford Dam
John Bohonek, Dodge County, County Conservationist
Ben Degner, Town of Ixonia public works
Tom Reiss, Rock River Power and Light, operator of Watertown dams
Tim Cargill, riparian landowner on the Rock River, town of Lebanon
Steve Folkman, riparian landowner on the Rock River, town of Lebanon
Rob Montgomery, water resource engineer on behalf of Tim Cargill and Steve Folkman

Observations

- We observed the staff gage at Rockvale Rd that the Town of Ixonia is reading. An additional wooden staff gage was placed by the town because the first 10 feet of gage installed earlier was overtopped by current flooding. Many areas of overbank flooding in farm fields and some flooded roads in the town
- We also observed many areas of overbank flooding in the town of Lebanon and visited the location of the USGS gauge on County Highway MM
- We visited the dam at Hustisford consisting of an overflow spillway and two operable tainter gates. The gates are adjusted by powered gate actuators that are operated from the control house on the dam. Both Tainter gates were partially open. There is an electric fish passage barrier operational at the tainter gates. The river was freely flowing downstream of the dam.
- There did not appear to be substantial overbank flooding upstream of Hustisford on Lake Sinnissippi or in Horicon.

- We observed (from a distance) the dam at Horicon. All gates appeared open. The USGS gauge is installed and the Northeast (downstream) side of the STH 33 bridge, approximately 1500 ft upstream of the dam.

Discussion

Rob Montgomery reviewed the watershed map and rainfall and river flow data. In recent months, the watershed has received very heavy rainfall, from 5 to 9 inches above normal for the year to date. Water level fluctuations upstream of Hustisford have been modest (approximately 1 foot, or less) but water level fluctuations in the Towns of Lebanon and Ixonia have been much more substantial, approximately 6 feet at the USGS Lebanon gauge, and at least 5 feet at Rockvale Road. Discharge in the Rock River had a peak in April 2024, and then decreased until the recent rainfalls. Discharge increased very substantially beginning in early June. Peak recorded discharge at the USGS Lebanon gauge peaked at 4150 CFS on June 7, which is (according to the Dodge County Flood Insurance Study report) between the 10-year and 50-year flood. At the time of our field trip, water levels were decreasing in Lebanon and Ixonia. A peak discharge of 3000 CFS reached the Watertown gauge on June 11. The reduction in peak discharge is likely due to storage routing downstream of Hustisford, In Lebanon and Ixonia.

Perry Goetsch gave Rob a list of daily water level observation he had made from May 13 until June 13. The water level peaked at 12.1 ft on June 11. Perry will continue to take river water level measurements.

The group discussed the issues around flooding and agreed that this will not be an easy problem to solve, but we may implement multiple separate projects and manage the system as a whole to provide improvements. We need to develop a proposed set of actions to begin moving forward.

Representative Dittrich suggested that we should contact the Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection as well as DNR to see what help can be provided.

Tom Reiss and others expressed interest in understanding what would be involved in removing the flow obstruction in the vicinity of Pipersville and what benefit it could provide. Rob Montgomery said that they had evaluated this several years ago and removing the obstruction would be a substantial permitting and construction effort, he will review the analysis in get back to the group.

We agreed to communicate ideas and proposed actions before our next group meeting so that we can agree on contacts and proposals to be made. We anticipate the next group meeting to be in August 2024

Action plan

1. Perry will continue to make water level observations at the staff gage at Rockvale Rd bridge.
2. Rob Montgomery agreed to investigate the following and report back to the group in the next several weeks. Note: this list has been expanded based on review after the meeting:
 - a. Report on previous analyses of removal of the area of high bedrock at Pipersville
 - b. Discuss rating curve calibration and gage operation with USGS and flood warning with National Weather Service
 - c. Review hydrologic model supplied by DNR for possible use in alternative analysis
 - d. Contact Patricia Cicero and others regarding the possibility of grants for potential water storage activities in the watershed
 - e. Contact DNR to discuss the operating orders, in particular what authority DNR has in setting operating orders for the federal dike in Horicon marsh, how a multi-dam operating order could be assembled and what kind of technical analysis assistance DNR staff could provide in evaluating management alternatives
 - f. Contact individual dam operators to confirm current operating procedures
 - g. Report out on ideas for mitigating and managing flooding for discussion in our next group meeting.
3. Perry Goetsch and Representative Dittrich will contact state representatives from adjacent districts and with representative Fitzgerald's office to discuss the flooding problem
4. All members of the group are encouraged to contact Rob Montgomery with suggestions on how to manage water levels.

Next Meeting

Anticipated to be in August 2024, and possibly in July also, notice will be sent out several weeks prior

Comments or Corrections:

Please contact Rob Montgomery at rob@ma-rs.org