

The Top 10 Reasons to oppose a white-water park in Stoughton, WI

In September of 2022, I drafted a 10-page report to the Army Corps of Engineers requesting a public hearing to provide factual information to the public, regarding the proposed building of a white-water park in the City of Stoughton. If you would like the complete report, please email me at alwaller228@gmail.com for a PDF copy.

1. The current Stoughton dam was refurbished in 2009

We, the taxpayers of Stoughton, have already paid \$560,000 for this repair. The DNR has stated that the Stoughton dam is in great working condition and could continue its functions of flood control for the next 75 - 100 years.

2. The history of the Stoughton dam

In 1847 Luke Stoughton built the dam to run a sawmill and a grinding mill. The dam created the Luke Stoughton Bay and he then began selling the beauty of the area to attract people to live in this community. You could say that the reason the City of Stoughton exists at all is because of the Stoughton dam.

3. Removing a dam removes control of the water level

One of the main purposes of dams along the Yahara River was to develop land around the Madison Lakes. The Tenney Dam - Lake Mendota. The Babcock Dam - Lake Monona and Lake Waubesa. The Lafollette Dam - Lake Kegonsa. Dane county has automated the operations of these three dams, before the Stoughton dam.

4. Where will the water levels be if the dam is removed?

The current language the city is using is "remediation". This is a fancy word that simply means dumping good topsoil from a farmer's field on top of potentially contaminated muck in the river. The process could take several years as the current muck needs to dry out before clean topsoil can be added to cap it off. Homeowners along this stretch of the river will see their property values drop as the water level drops. From Stoughton's website on River Park FAQs regarding Property Values - *"If, on the other hand, a dam is removed that created a pond unique to the area, property values may decline. One person's lost pond is another person's restored river."*

5. The Luke Stoughton Bay

The water levels in this bay average between 1-3 feet. Here is a quote from one of the city administrators from their Yahara River Park FAQs document, *"The river will narrow considerably..... Exposed riverbed will initially look like a mudflat."* The City has already removed the beautiful photos of this Bay from it's new website. In the city's mind, the Luke Stoughton Bay is already gone.

6. The Pleasant Springs Bay

The people of Pleasant Springs are united in their efforts to keep the water level in their bay to the level the Wisconsin DNR set in 1983. A water level at the dam below 841 ft. will adversely affect recreational use and aesthetics, drain wetlands and affect the river habitat.

7. Water Quality

Between July to November, the water quality of the Yahara River is not recommended for swimming. The swimming beach at the Lake Kegonsa State park is located just before the Yahara River at the Lafollette Dam. The Blue-Green algae experts for Dane County have clearly stated, *"when in doubt, stay out!"* Tom and Judy Dowling's story - *infectious disease from exposure to the Blue-green algae in the Yahara River.*

8. Water Safety and Liability

Whitewater Kayaking has 2.9 deaths per 100,000 episodes. The company that is selling this white-water park to the city of Stoughton is now dealing with 2 recent deaths. They can and will continue to say that they were just accidents, however the parents of the deceased children and family members might think otherwise.

9. White-water park business failures

The city claims that building a white-water park will bring all sorts of new revenue to the city. To my knowledge the city still does not have a business plan for how the park will be run. They also do not have the internal business capabilities to run and staff a livery. The Olympic scale white-water park in Wausau Wisconsin is losing money and costing its taxpayers annually.

10. Costs to Taxpayers

Since 2016 the city has already spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on this project. The city has not been fully transparent with taxpayers on how these funds have been sourced, budgeted and allocated.