



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



DANIEL EICHINGER
DIRECTOR

August 13, 2020

Phil Dast, President
Secord Lake Association

Dave Kepler, Chair
Four Lakes Task Force

RE: Secord Lake Resident Concerns

Dear Messrs Dast and Kepler:

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has received written concerns from multiple property owners regarding the water levels in Secord Lake. MDNR shares the concerns of local property owners regarding the drawdown of the Secord impoundment. However, the failure of Boyce Hydro Power, LLC (Boyce) to conduct safety inspections and complete necessary repairs is the reason that the lake remains drawn down.

The primary concern of all the agencies involved is the safety of Secord and Smallwood dams and the remaining portions of Edenville and Sanford dams. While MDNR is concerned with the impacts to the natural resources of the Tittabawassee River system, we are also working the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to resolve priority safety concerns surrounding both the failed dams as well as the Secord and Smallwood dams.

Immediately following the failure of Edenville and Sanford dams, FERC ordered Boyce to lower the impoundments at Secord and Smallwood dams to conduct safety inspections. FERC directed Boyce to leave the impoundments at the elevation of the spillway crests until they received permission from FERC to restore the impoundments to their normal levels. Boyce filed a letter with FERC on July 8, 2020 that included an inspection report for the Secord Project. FERC found the inspection report deficient and required Boyce to provide additional information by August 20, 2020. In their letter, FERC reiterates its position that the Secord impoundment cannot be returned to normal elevations until Boyce receives authorization from FERC. The MDNR does not have the authority to change that directive.

In addition, in a July 30, 2020 letter, FERC directed Boyce to conduct targeted snuffbox mussel surveys in the uppermost and more riverine portions of the impoundments and tailwaters of all three of their Tittabawassee River hydropower projects (Smallwood, Secord, and Sanford). The targeted surveys FERC required can be done irrespective of whether the Smallwood and Secord impoundments are filled or in a drawdown condition.

Both the requirement to drawdown the Secord impoundment to assess the safety of the Secord Dam and the requirement to complete the mussel surveys have been ordered by FERC. However, the requirement for Boyce to complete the mussel surveys is not the reason the impoundment has not been returned to normal elevations. To restore water levels in the Secord impoundment, Boyce must assure FERC that all required safety measures are satisfied.

If you have questions, please contact me at 517-388-4536 or thiamkeelakulk@michigan.gov.

Sincerely,



Kesiree Thiamkeelakul
Resource Analyst
Habitat Management Unit
Fisheries Division

Cc Kimberly Bose, FERC
CarLisa Linton, FERC
Jack Dingledine, USFWS
Scott Hicks, USFWS
Jessica Pruden, USFWS
Brian Rudolph, EGLE
Jeff Jolley, MDNR
Jessica Mistak, MDNR