

## **Temporary Secord, Smallwood, Wixom and Sanford Lake Drawdowns Planned for Fall, 2018**

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is requiring all owners of earth-embankment hydroelectric dams to conduct special "focused spillway inspections". These inspections are a consequence of the near-failure of the Oroville, California earth-embankment hydroelectric dam in 2017. Owners of affected dams will inspect the downstream structure of the spillways, looking closely for any part of that structure that needs repairs. This requires exposing parts of spillways that are normally submerged.

We have been advised by Boyce Hydro Power LLC. (Boyce) that all four Tittabawassee River dams are tentatively scheduled for this inspection in the Fall of 2018, plus required spillway gate tests. The inspection and spillway tests require that Sanford, Wixom, Smallwood and Secord Lakes be drawn down 4' (four feet) below normal summer levels. It will take 6-10 days to draw the lakes down, 4-8 days for inspection and spillway gate testing and then 5 or more days to refill the lakes. Because the lakes will be drawn down below their regulated seasonal levels, Boyce needs approval from FERC to perform the drawdowns and is also required to contact Michigan regulatory agencies (e.g., DNR and DEQ) to request their comments on the proposed drawdown dates. Boyce has contacted each of these agencies and is awaiting formal replies.

**Boyce's current plan and schedule:** Drawdowns will begin Sept. 20 at a rate not to exceed 8" (eight inches) per day. The lakes will be drawn down 4' by Oct. 1. The spillway structures will then be inspected and photographed. All the spillway gates will be inspected and operated. Commencing between Oct. 5 to 8, the lakes will be refilled at a rate not to exceed 9" (nine inches) per day. It will take at least 5 days to refill the lakes.

**Things to keep in mind.** Readers are advised that, even with FERC approval of the schedule above, there will still be uncertainty. Rainfall, or the lack of it, may affect timing of lake lowering and refilling. Heavy rains could interfere with drawing the lakes down and/or maintaining the lowered levels. Refilling the lakes could take 5 days to a few months, depending on how much rain our area gets this Fall and any delays in the inspection process.

We are advising the public of the planned drawdown now, as this may affect plans people have for removing boats and other equipment from the lake prior to winter. We are in favor of conducting the spillway inspections and spillway gate tests. We have reason to believe the inspections and tests will happen this year. We expect to have confirmed dates later in August. When we have those dates, we will publish another notice to the public.

We are grateful that FERC and Boyce have agreed to conduct the inspections and spillway tests outside the busiest part of the boating season.