

Frequently Asked Questions - FAQs

What does the aerator do?

The purpose for the aeration system was to help minimize the occurrence of winter fish kills by creating 30-60 acres of open water for natural surface aeration and to an extent, promote oxygen transfer to the water column. Aerator operation helps create a limited refuge for fish. The aerator helps mitigate low levels of dissolved oxygen that occur from the decomposition of organic material carried into the reservoir as well as organic material generated within the reservoir from blue-green algal blooms.

Why does the Big Eau Pleine need an aerator?

One of the causes of the massive fish kill experienced on the Big Eau Pleine in the winter of 2008-2009 was the fact that the 30 year old aerator is no longer functioning properly to provide enough dissolved oxygen to keep the fish alive throughout the winter.

What is wrong with the old aerator?

Over the years, the holes in the pipes used to disperse oxygen into the water have increased in size and these larger holes do not allow the water to absorb the oxygen properly. The current aerator supplies air flow during the winter through 14 PVC aeration lines located on the reservoir bottom. The aerator lines fan out over a one mile area from the aerator building. The 14 PVC lines range in length from 700 ft to 2,200 ft and total approximately 22,000 ft. Over the years, some of this equipment has degraded and needs to be replaced.

Will a new aerator prevent fish kills?

Not completely, but a new aerator will minimize the impact of low levels of dissolved oxygen that occur during the winter on the Big Eau Pleine. Fish can still be stranded during times of low water and during times of rapid draw down of the reservoir. Winter fish kills on the Big Eau Pleine can not be completely eliminated until we can stop the pollution that runs into the river from throughout the watershed.

Who will maintain the aerator and operate it?

Operations of the aerator is a shared responsibility. WVIC has agreed to pay the cost of the electricity for operating the aeration system. WVIC will also be monitoring Dissolved Oxygen (D.O.) and Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) conditions in the reservoir throughout the winter and coordinating aerator operation with the DNR. DNR has purchased fiberglass poles and materials for erecting the safety fence around the open water created by the aerator system, and will coordinate installation of the fence and warning signs with volunteer help and monitor the safety fence.

What is the ATC Grant?

The American Transmission Company agreed to pay an environmental impact fee to counties and communities in Wisconsin to have high voltage power lines run through their boundaries. These fees form a fund that the Marathon County Finance Committee administers in the form of

matching fund grants to worthy environmental uses in the county. On August 10, Marathon County Finance Committee approved a request from BEPCO through the Town of Bergen in the amount of \$27,000 for replacing the aerator on the Big Eau Pleine. No taxpayer money is being used.