

## William Barthel

**From:** "Helen Sarakinos" <h9arakinos@wisconsinriver8.org>  
**To:** <olwillard@msn.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 13, 2005 11:12 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Nemahbin Roller Mill Dam

Dear Bill,

I spent an afternoon in November with Margaret Zerwekh, owner of the Nemahbin Roller Mill Dam. She has been keeping us informed about what is going on with the City of Delafield's interest in the dam. I have also read the recent article (Dec 22) that appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Unfortunately, City Administrator Carlson doesn't seem to have a good understanding of rivers and riparian shorelands and perpetuates the misinformation that the restoration of the river would be bad for river-dwelling species. Frogs, turtles, egrets and herons are all aquatic species that are adapted to, and sometimes require running water. For instance, wood turtles actually migrate up and down a river by moving through the midchannel of the river, which is their preferred route.

Carlson also mentions the use of the dam for flood control purposes. This is another misperception - any dams that have ponds behind them are not flood control structures. To provide flood control, the dam needs to remain open and the storage space behind it needs to be empty so in the event of a high flow occurrence, the dam gates are shut and the "empty bowl" fills up and controls the river flow. That is not how this dam is built and operated nor is it what the upstream residents want to see there.

I think the Common Council needs to understand that there are very real issues of money involved in buying, repairing, insuring and maintaining that dam, and that there is NOT money available as grants to help them pay for it, despite the assertions of the City Administrator. Most importantly, residents need to understand that they will ultimately foot the bill for this dam either directly through their taxes or indirectly because money spent on a dam is lost opportunity to spend it on other necessities for the City and its residents.

In terms of help, the best way that RAW can help is to help local river restoration supporters. Are there others like you who would like to see a restored river in their community (I know Margaret would)? Does the City Council know that there are residents who oppose it? Have they heard your concerns? If we come in as an outside organization, our opinion will not be welcome by the City Council because we're just viewed as a Madison environmental group. However, they do have to listen to their own residents. If you would like to talk, I'd be happy to set up a time to talk over the phone or even meet up. I think it is important for residents to hear another viewpoint, maybe even a letter to the editor. There are a lot of resources out there showing how river restoration through dam removal can be a good thing, including many communities who have made the decision and never regretted it. Please let me know how we can help. I truly believe that past all the controversy, river restoration in a community is often a wonderful opportunity to revitalize the community and create something beautiful, but people often have trouble seeing past what is already there.

My contact info is included below. Thank you for contacting us and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Helen Sarakinos  
Dams Program Manager  
River Alliance of Wisconsin  
306 E. Wilson, Ste.2W  
Madison, WI 53703

1/13/2005