



Frequently Asked Questions about Lake Shafer and Lake Freeman

Q: Does the Heart of the Tippy campaign have an opinion about lake levels?

A: No – the Heart of the Tippy campaign is focused on protecting mussels in the river through encouraging mussel-friendly behaviors.

Q: What is the history of Lake Freeman and Lake Shafer?

A: The lakes were formed when Oakdale Dam and Norway Dam were built along the Tippecanoe River. Dams disrupt the natural flow of rivers. As water becomes trapped upstream of the dams, artificial lakes, or impoundments are created. On the Tippecanoe River, these impoundments are what we know as Lake Freeman and Lake Shafer.

Q: Why are people talking about the lakes and the mussels?

A: Dams restrict water flow into rivers allowing the formation of lakes, but alter the natural river flow below a dam. In this case, the dams restrict water flow into the lower portion of the Tippecanoe River. Mussels are an entirely aquatic species and need water to survive. When water gets too low in the river, they will die. As many of the mussels in the Tippecanoe River are endangered, the Endangered Species Act protects these mussels against illegal “take” which includes mussel death due to low water level (<http://tinyurl.com/USFWS-mussels>). Therefore water is released from the lakes into the river to increase water levels to a safe level for mussel survival.

Q: Why were the dams installed?

A: Both Norway Dam and Oakdale Dam were installed in the 1920s with the purpose of generating hydroelectric power. Since 1944, the Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO) has owned and operated the dams. Because the dams generate energy, they are licensed under guidelines set forth by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). You can read more about NIPSCO and the dams here: <http://www.nipscohydro.com/>.

Q: Who manages Oakdale and Norway Dams?

A: Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO) is responsible for managing the dams and maintaining as close to a natural flow of the river as possible. This means the water must have the same flow as it enters the lake and as it leaves the dam and enters the river. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) provides guidance to NIPSCO on how to avoid violating the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS does **not** decide water levels of the lakes. You can read more about USFWS's guidance to NIPSCO here: <http://tinyurl.com/USFWS-mussels>.

Q: Who decides when to lower water levels in the lakes?

A: The USFWS does **not** decide **how** to maintain the water levels. NIPSCO determines how to meet the requirements to avoid violating the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS and NIPSCO are working together to ensure an equitable distribution of water between the lakes and the river.

Q: What if river water levels that flow into the lake are naturally low because of lack of rain or drought?

A: NIPSCO operates their dams under run-of-river practices, which means water flow rates measured north of Oakdale Dam should match water flow rates south of Oakdale Dam. If river levels north of the dams are naturally low due to unseasonably high temperatures and low rainfall, river levels will also be low south of the dams. USFWS understands that this reduction in natural flow could "cause federally listed mussels to die, but there would be no violation of the Endangered Species Act by NIPSCO because they would be releasing "natural" run-of-the-river. The mussel mortality would be considered a natural occurrence with no fault attributed to NIPSCO." (Questions and Answers About the Technical Assistance Letter to Northern Indiana Public Service Company and Tippecanoe River Mussels, published by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, August 14, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/USFWS-mussels>)

Q: What about the mussels in the lakes when lake levels are lowered?

A: While you may find many different species of mussels in the lakes, the endangered mussels are typically found only in the river, as they are adapted to moving water.

Q: Where can I find more information?

A: The USFWS has further information about the lakes at <http://tinyurl.com/USFWS-mussels>.