

The Byllesby Dam



A century-old dam

The Byllesby Dam, located along the Cannon River in southern Dakota County, was built in 1909 and its turbines were installed in 1910 — 109 years ago. The dam serves the region by controlling flooding along the Cannon River and providing the recreational Lake Byllesby. The dam's turbines produce about 12,000 megawatts of power each year — enough to power the City of Cannon Falls. The dam's 1,146-squaremile watershed covers nine counties in southeastern Minnesota. The dam is federally regulated as “high hazard” because of the lives and property lost downstream in the event of a failure.

People from across the region and beyond enjoy hiking, boating, camping, swimming, fishing and more at the 1,432-acre lake created by the dam. In 2018, 163,000 people visited Lake Byllesby Regional Park.

MILLIONS OF DOLLARS INVESTED FOR SAFETY

Originally built and maintained by the Henry M. Byllesby Company, the dam was considered too small for commercial use and was sold to Goodhue and Dakota counties in 1969. The dam lies on the border of Dakota and Goodhue counties but has been owned and maintained solely by Dakota County since 2009. In recent years, Dakota County has invested nearly \$6 million of local property taxpayer dollars to meet federal requirements and keep the dam safe. The county's plan is to repay taxpayers with the electricity revenues generated from the dam, but the maintenance costs are much higher than the revenue from the undersized and inefficient turbines.

The revenue from increased energy production would also offset the burden to Dakota County taxpayers to keep the Byllesby Dam safe and preserve the regional resource.

Dakota County received \$6 million in state bonding funds in 2017 to support replacement of the turbines, generators and powerhouse. Turbine equipment was acquired and a new powerhouse building was designed. Federal regulatory changes prompted the need to change powerhouse design elements to accommodate new regulations.



A construction firm was hired in 2018. It was determined at that time that project costs had increased upward of \$30 million due to construction cost increases of 19 percent between 2014 and 2020, regulatory changes and project scope changes.

HOW THE LEGISLATURE CAN HELP

Dakota County is asking for an additional \$9 million from the Legislature to help fund increased project costs to replace the century-old turbines and the powerhouse. A turbine replacement would nearly double the dam's capacity to produce clean, renewable energy and reduce maintenance costs by 60 percent.

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Byllesby Dam project timeline

2014

Project study determines current dam equipment at end of life and powerhouse facility needs improvements.

2015

Project design contract awarded. Project budget established at \$14 million.

2016

Dakota County receives \$6 million in state bonding funds for dam project.

2017

Turbine manufacturer selected.

2018

New regulations required project design changes. Project costs increase upward of \$28 million.

2020

Dakota County receives \$9 million in state bonding to support the project.

