

# WEBSTER AND BACKWATER LAKES CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

April 10, 2026

## Webster-Backwater Lakes Dam Conservancy District Establishment Project – Status

### **This project is coming to a conclusion:**

- On February 27, 2026, certified signed petitions, a hydrological study and a pre-engineering study were submitted to the Kosciusko County Circuit Court.
- Subsequently, the Judge approved the submission and passed it on to the Indiana Natural Resource Commission for its consideration. The Commission will arrange for at least one additional public hearing on the matter. The date for the hearing is pending.
- The petitions were signed by 60% of the Freeholders (property owners) within the district borders. These Freeholders own properties that collectively equal 66% of the assessed property value within the district. [Petition Process Checklist Bullet-point.pdf](#)
- [See Petition & Memorandum Here.pdf](#) The purpose of the Conservancy District will be **specifically** for the future maintenance, repair and reconstruction of the Webster/Backwater Lakes Dam. The memorandum required by the Kosciusko County Commissioners narrows the purpose of the initial petition.
- Financing for the project will be secured through any combination of property tax assessments (limited by the Indiana Legislature to \$.05 per \$100 of assessed property value), grants, bonds, Indiana Tax Increment Financing or assessments. Freeholders with a lower property assessed value will pay less tax than those owners having higher property assessed value. i.e., a \$300,000 assessed value property would generate an additional \$150 per year in property tax at the above rate. The Conservancy Board of Directors will assume the tasks of final quotes and financing.
- Final project costs may differ from those indicated in the engineering reports once a comprehensive redesign of the dam is determined and repair or replacement quotes are secured that satisfy the DNR's requirement to bring the dam to modern dam design standards. Efforts will also be made to find ways to protect as many homes as possible that are located on or near the dam to avoid the expense of their purchase and removal.
- Paid project costs include: (1) Pre-Engineering Study at \$69,000; (2) Hydrological Study including an engineering inspection of the dam and a Hazard Classification Analysis at \$186,400; and (3) legal expenses to date of \$10,000. Both studies include project cost estimates based on past DNR engineering recommendations for corrections to the existing dam along with costs to remove homes from the dam.
- WLCA, with the assistance of The Watershed Foundation, collected \$200,000 in voluntary tax-deductible contributions to help pay for pre-engineering studies, legal fees and immediate repairs. Any remaining funds from donations to this project and any money received from the current litigation regarding the DNR's accrued liability for necessary repairs to the outlet control structure over and above WLCA's litigation costs and other project expenses will be transferred to the conservancy.
- Property and lives below the dam are at stake if the issues with the dam are not resolved in addition to reduced property values on both lakes and within the Town of North Webster.

## Let us correct the misinformation you have received in the mail from Webster Dam Association.

An individual, doing business as Webster Dam Association, has circulated mailings to property owners both inside and outside the proposed conservancy district creating confusion about the district's boundaries. His mailings attack forming a conservancy district for long-term dam maintenance and include substantial misinformation and erroneous speculation about how the district would operate.

Contrary to his claim that each owner would pay \$8,000 in new property taxes, Indiana law limits a conservancy district levy to \$0.05 per \$100 of assessed value. A property assessed at \$300,000 would pay about an additional \$150/year. Project costs are not divided equally among owners as taxes are apportioned by assessed value. Also, the district can pursue non-repayable grants and other funding which would reduce taxpayer burden. The final project cost will not be known until the conservancy board hires an engineering firm to produce a state-approved design acceptable to and approved by the Indiana DNR.

In similar fashion, this individual has claimed that the conservancy district can mortgage your property to pay for this project. That is blatantly untrue.

The DNR has issued "Notices of Opportunity to Correct" and "Notices of Violation" to the Webster Lake Conservation Association (WLCA) and several property owners near the dam. Those notices carry appeal opportunities and can also lead to fines and compliance costs—factors absent from his alternative proposal or his call for more study prior to any correction.

This Wester Dam Association should not be confused with the Webster Lake Conservation Association, Inc., which has worked for nearly three years and spent over \$400,000 to establish the Webster/Backwater Lakes Dam Conservancy District for the future maintenance of the Webster/Backwater Lakes dam.

WLCA, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, respects this individual's right to communicate but objects to the misleading statements in his mailings and his attempts to derail a process many volunteers and owners have worked years to achieve. If you have further questions regarding this project, please write to WLCA at [websterlakeassociation@gmail.com](mailto:websterlakeassociation@gmail.com).