

Case Statement in Opposition to the Proposed Mounds Lake Reservoir

Adopted by the Heart of the River Coalition 10/17/13
moundslakereservoir.org

The Heart of the River Coalition (HTR) was formed when local media reported that the Corporation for Economic Development (CED) had been working for three years on a plan to build a dam on the White River in Anderson. The reservoir would destroy seven miles of mature riparian ecosystem including a fen within a State Nature Preserve, other associated wetlands, and one-third of Mounds State Park. The area affected is also one of the best for White River kayaking, canoeing, and outdoor recreation of all kinds.

We disagree with DLZ's Phase I feasibility study findings that there are no "fatal flaws" with the planned reservoir project. This is a textbook example of where not to build a reservoir. We believe that a conflict of interest exists for the authors of any phase of the feasibility studies if they stand to profit from construction of the dam. The historic and environmental value of this area is not to be understated.

The CED's objective for promoting the reservoir warrants scrutiny. If the goal is the economic revitalization of Anderson, this plan fails to capitalize on our best natural assets. If the goal is to supplement the water supply for Hamilton and Marion Counties, alternatives such as new well fields and water conservation should be thoroughly evaluated and developed before resorting to a destructive and enormously expensive reservoir project.

The West Fork of the White River is a state-designated canoe trail. It has been identified by the natural heritage program as having outstanding ecological importance and was identified in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory (1982) as qualifying for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Mounds State Park contains habitat for several threatened and endangered species, and the earthworks are the best-preserved remnants of the prehistoric Adena-Hopewell culture anywhere in Indiana. It is the ONLY tourist destination in Anderson that regularly brings in visitors from out of state.

No other community in central Indiana contains these amenities so close to downtown. Anderson could be working to improve connectivity to these assets. With careful stewardship, they can benefit Anderson in perpetuity while a reservoir's lifespan is measured in decades. Following are the reasons we oppose the plan:

Health Concerns

1. The reservoir would sit atop or adjacent to the site of several industrial hazardous waste dumps. Various automotive-related industries used the dump that underlies Mounds Mall for many decades without oversight or regulation.
2. Upstream combined sewer overflows and illegal use of county drains are current sources of *E. coli* (and other bacterial) contamination of the river.
3. The destruction and/or removal of thousands of mature trees in the river corridor would have an adverse effect on air and water quality.

Environmental Concerns

4. Removal of the mature riparian buffer would accelerate erosion, which would be severe and extensive. It would both threaten the integrity of prehistoric earthworks at Mounds State Park and shorten the lifespan of the reservoir by depositing tons of silt behind the dam.
5. Valuable habitat for several endangered species including the Indiana Bat (and other species) would be lost.

The logo for the Heart of the River Coalition features the words "Heart of the River" in a stylized, handwritten font. The word "Heart" is in blue, "of the" is in black, and "River" is in blue. A blue line forms a heart shape around the word "Heart".

6. This reservoir would soon be invaded by aggressive invasive species including zebra mussels and Eurasian milfoil that are problems in other Indiana lakes.
7. The reservoir could impact a designated Well Protection Area for the City and could also affect individual wells.
8. Native mussel and American eel populations in Delaware County would be prevented from migrating downstream.
9. Thermal pollution, which is not now a factor in water quality, would be significant in a manmade lake and would negatively affect aquatic species downstream.
10. An old landfill, a former toxic industrial waste site, a construction demolition waste dump, and a Brownfield site are present within the project area boundaries.

Economic Concerns

11. Many businesses would be lost and some would not relocate.
12. One or more existing bridges would probably not be replaced, rerouting traffic and stranding parts of the community.
13. Litigation on behalf of affected property owners could ensue if this plan goes forward, with the cost of defending the reservoir borne by regulatory agencies and tax dollars.
14. Ongoing dam and reservoir maintenance would add great expense to the initial estimated \$400 million cost, which we believe is low considering the necessary relocation of city infrastructure, homes, businesses, bridges, and roads.
15. The Anderson Airport would probably have to be relocated.
16. The rezoned 100-year floodplain would impact a new set of property owners.

Best Practice Concerns

17. Best practice in 2013 usually means the *removal* of dams, not building new ones.
18. Man-made lakes are temporary solutions to long-term regional water use problems, which Indiana has not fully addressed.

Historic and Community Concerns

19. The historic Irondale residential neighborhood, including two houses of worship and a way of life for many, would be lost and could not be replaced or moved.
20. A significant remaining portion of the 19th century Indiana Canal project would be inundated, along with anything that remains of the 1801 Moravian Mission.
21. The Phase I study suggested that portions of Mounds State Park may need to be excavated before prehistoric and historic Native American artifacts were lost.
22. The topography at Mounds State Park would be forever changed, along with its interpretive value in understanding why the Adena-Hopewell people chose the site for their extensive earthworks.
23. The historic 1836 Bronnenberg Cemetery lies adjacent to the river.

Conclusion

For these and other reasons, the Coalition believes that a dam and reservoir on the White River would not be in the best interests of the community, the natural resources present, or the environment. HTR aims to continue to make this case and suggest more viable alternatives as more becomes known about the plan and its impacts.

Heart of the River is a volunteer-driven coalition of individuals and interest groups responding to a plan to build a dam and reservoir on the White River. For more information, visit moundslakereservoir.org. The coalition has a formal Fiscal Agency relationship with the Citizens Action Coalition Education Fund, an IRS designated 501 (C) 3 organization. Founded in 1976, the CACEF has a mission to protect the environment and conserve natural resources.

Tax deductible donations to Heart of the River can be made payable to the Citizens Action Coalition Education Fund with Heart of the River Coalition noted on the memo line. Visit cacefindiana.org to make a donation online.