Kinni Corridor Project Questions and Answers

Updated 9.21.17

**Frequently asked questions*

I. Project Basics, Planning Process, and Charrette

***What is the Kinni Corridor Project all about?**

In 2016, the City of River Falls embarked on a comprehensive, three-year planning process focused on the Kinnickinnic River Corridor and the existing and future relationship of the community with the river and adjoining urban and undeveloped areas. When complete, the Corridor Plan will establish a future vision for the area and strategies for implementation. The Plan will address land use, economic development, renewable energy, recreation, tourism, and conservation opportunities to best meet the needs of the community.

***What is a "River Corridor"?**

A river corridor includes both a river and the areas surrounding it. The breadth or width of the Kinni Corridor varies but is generally less than one mile either side of the center of the river.

***How many miles of the Kinni are in the "Corridor"?**

The Kinnickinnic River is 22 miles long. The segment that runs through River Falls and the surrounding towns – and considered for the project's purposes to be in the "corridor" – is seven miles long. The segment of the river that flows through the City proper is approximately three miles long. See map.

***Who oversees the Project?**

An 11-member Kinni Corridor Project Committee provides oversight and guides project activities. Staff and consultant teams work together to support the committee and keep project activities on track. Buddy Lucero, Community Development Director, is the project manager. The committee with recommend a preferred option to the River Falls City Council in June 2019.

***How long will the planning process take? When will a decision be made about future of the corridor?**

The corridor plan is expected to be adopted in June 2019. Decisions regarding the future of the corridor will be made and refined throughout the planning process.

How has the community been engaged in the planning process?

A variety of public engagement strategies have been used to establish and continue the conversation with the entire community, including the project website; social media; a series of community discussions call "Tech Talks" regarding topics of interest; surveys; two community planning workshops; talks at local service clubs, organizations, neighborhoods, and faith communities; booths at a variety of community events; and more.

***When will the Council make a decision regarding dam removal?**
The City will decide about licensing the two hydroelectric projects in February 2018 to allow for 5.5 years for the licensing or surrender process to be completed before the current license expires in 2023. There is no schedule regarding decisions two remove one or both of the dams. That decision will depend on the licensing decision as well as the results of the corridor plan.

***Why not have a citywide vote? Why just let the City Council make such an important decision?**
While it would be possible to have a referendum vote, the process that the Council decided on was to use the corridor planning process to increase the awareness of the community regarding the importance of the river to the community and the merits of dams staying or dams being removed. The process will continue to allow for public input and public comment right up to the Council's final decision which is expected in February 2018.

When do we decide on our core guiding principles?
At Tech Talk No. 6, the speakers talked about the planning principals that often apply to projects like the corridor study. Early in the project, the Committee discussed the value of a mission and vision statement and planning principals. The discussion was tabled until after the charrette to allow the entire Committee and the community to become more knowledgeable regarding all the issues involved. The Committee will begin discussing planning principals at their October 5 meeting. After the charrette (at the end of October), and again after the Council's decision regarding relicensing, the planning principals will be reviewed and refined before completing the corridor plan based on the preferred scenario for the corridor.

Is the Lake George park/walking area a must? How much would the project be without it?
There are no "musts" at this stage. As the project progresses through the charrette scheduled for Oct. 25-28, additional ideas will be developed and refined, and several preferred alternatives will be developed, which may or may not include a Lake George park and walking areas. Once the alternatives are identified, a cost analysis will be developed.

How is the Corridor Committee marketing the charrette to let all community members know that they should attend?
The Committee will use social media (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube), and traditional media sources like the River Falls Journal (ads, articles, and editorials), utility bill inserts, posters/flyers, event calendars, and the City newsletter to spread the word about the charrette.

Is there any opportunity to involve the school district in planning charrette?
The involvement of the school district along with other groups and individuals will greatly benefit the outcome of the charrette. The charrette will include multiple touch points for all members of the community to participate.

What exactly will the public be able to contribute on day two (Thursday) of the charrette?
On day two of the charrette, the public is invited to join with members of the planning team who will be working to develop concept scenarios for the corridor. Interactions will likely be one-on-one or via small group informal dialogue to best capture the ideas from the community.

II. River Ecology

***How do the dams impact the ecology of the river?**
In general, dams slow the flow of water and change the habitat in the area of the reservoir from riverine to lake/pond. Both the dams operate in a "run-of-river" fashion, so the same amount of water that flows to the reservoir flows through the dam. Therefore, reduced flows are not an issue. Because the Kinni is a cold-water stream, the reservoirs warm up and contribute to a warming of the lower river. The reservoirs can trap sediments from upstream, preventing excess downstream sedimentation. However, reducing downstream sedimentation can also starve the lower river of sediment that would contribute to greater in-stream habitat diversity on the lower river.

How common are cold water streams are in this region?
The Kinni lies in the northern part of the geologic region called the Driftless Area, 24,000 square miles of unglaciated land in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. This area is recognized nationally for an abundance of trout streams. That said, the Kinnickinnic River is uncommon amongst streams in this region. The Kinni is designated as an Outstanding Resource Water (OWR) by the DNR and is considered one of the most outstanding Class I Trout streams in the state.

How does the uniqueness of the Kinni affect the value of restoring the river ecosystem? The uniqueness of the resources demands that efforts to protect and enhance the ecosystem and to ensure the long-term viability of the resources should be a very high priority. According to the WDNR, the Kinnickinnic River has one of the highest densities of brown trout in the state. Trout densities range from 2,000 to 12,000 trout per stream mile. The river is classified as an Outstanding Resource Water (OWR) above STH 35 and the remaining portion of the river classified as Class I trout is an Exception Resource Water (ERW). The trout fishery and aquatic habitat is threatened by agricultural and urbanization. To put the Kinni in perspective, of Wisconsin's 53,413 streams and rivers, only 254 are designated as ORW, and 1,544 are designated as ERW. Wisconsin has a total of 42,000 stream/river miles in the state. Based on the current ORW/ERW list, a total of 3,179 stream miles (7.6%) have been designated as ORW, and 4,668 stream miles (11%) have been designated as ERW (source: WDNR).

Don't the dams now, and restored waterfalls with dams removed, prevent upstream fish passage?
The dams prevent fish passage today. In a dam removal scenario, the natural cascades in the Kinni are expected to continue to serve as barrier to upstream fish migration.

Is upstream movement of invasive species really an issue with dam removal?
The barriers to invasive species include the cold-water conditions of the river and the dams. In a dam removal scenarios, the falls would likely serve as a natural barrier to invasive species.

What are the negative impacts of our dams on the ecology of the river including fish, fowl, and other river/lake wildlife?
The primary negative impacts related to the dams include the discharge of warm water from the two reservoirs during the summer season and infrequent changes in flow when the bar screens of the hydro facility intakes are cleaned.
Are there any positive impacts of our dams on river ecology?
The reservoirs that the dams create – Lake George and Lake Louise – represent habitat diversity that benefits wildlife specifically.

If you were to decide whether or not to remove the dams solely on environment impact, would you keep or remove OUR dams?
The Lower Kinni is currently a Class I trout stream. However, there are several factors that threaten the long-term health of the ecosystem, including the dams. Removal of the dams will change the lower Kinni – for example – by reducing the temperatures in the lower reaches of the river and contributing to the long-term viability of the resource. Assuming that the only issue under consideration is the long-term health of the river, then dam removal would make sense. That said, other threats including climate change, agricultural runoff, loss of ground water influences above I-94, and urban stormwater are also significant factors to be considered.

Should we spend millions to clean up the Kinni only to see it later re-contaminated in 20-30 years?
The Kinni is not contaminated at present, so the risk of recontamination is quite limited. However, any significant public works project such as dam removal or stream restoration includes ongoing maintenance ensure the long-term performance of the improvements. If, for example, the reservoirs were dredged and all the sediment was removed, the removal effort would need to be repeated periodically to maintain the deepened reservoir condition. Without maintenance, and upstream runoff controls, the dredging project would need to be repeated.

III. Sediment

When were the reservoirs considered to be filled in?
Based on four studies including 1985, 1998, 2006 and 2016, the sediment depth in Lake George has been determined to be approximately five feet deep.

How much sediment would actually need to be removed from Lake George/Louise under optimal dam removal conditions and how much sediment could be locked in place through vegetation and other stormwater management actions/design?
In an optimal dam removal scenario, the amount of sediment removed and hauled away from Lake George or Lake Louise would be minimized to reduce cost. The sediment could remain within the current footprint of the reservoir, subject to flood plain, wetland, and buffer regulations. The goal would be to leave as much sediment in place as possible.

***Is there any human health risk associated with placing reservoir sediment in the river corridor?**
Based on the 2016 Sediment Study completed by Inter-Fluve for the City of River Falls, there is a very low health risk associated with placing reservoir sediment in the river corridor.

If the dams are removed, how does sediment from that activity compare to the erosion entering the river from cropland erosion?
In a dam removal scenario, the dam removal would be done in a way to minimize the amount of sediment that would be discharge to the lower river. Sediment transport from dam removal will be a one-time event as opposed to the annual sediment loading from within the City and from the agricultural areas upstream. These upstream sources overtime were responsible for filling of the two impoundments.

Removing both dams will put more sediment in Lake St. Croix. What will be done about this issue?
There is little sediment retention occurring today in either Lake George or Lake Louise, so, in a post-dam removal scenario, any increase in sediment loading to Lake St. Croix is expected to be acceptable.

If the makeup of the sediment is sand/gravel, is it possible that there is a market where this might be sold for construction and provide cost offset?
While it is possible there is some market value to the material, no efforts to estimate how much material could be utilized or sold. It is unlikely that the sediment could be marketed unless a very large project nearby was taking place at the same time.

How much sediment would be released from the river channel under optimal dam removal conditions?
In a dam removal or partial dam removal scenario, removal efforts would be conducted to retain as much sediment as possible, minimizing the release of sediment to the Lower Kinni to the maximum extent possible.

How much of the sediment can be sequestered in the river corridor without hauling out for placement elsewhere?
The goal of any dam removal project will be to minimize the amount of sediment released downstream. How and where the existing sediment will be sequestered has not been determined.

IV. Watershed, Waterfalls and Public Infrastructure

How would the water be released into the stream as the dams are removed?
Today, the dams are operated in a “run-of-the-river” fashion meaning all the water that flows to the dams flows through the dam. Because the reservoirs are nearly full of sediment, the amount of water to be released is not too large. In a dam removal scenario, a slow release of water would be planned to minimize impacts to river ecology.

There is a floating monitoring station on Lake George. What is it monitoring?
The floating monitoring station was installed by the Friends of the Kinni to collect basic water chemistry and temperature data during the summer of 2017.

If the dams were to be removed, how high will the new falls be?
Dam removal will not create 'new' falls. With the dams removed, the river will wash away remaining sediments that overlay the existing bedrock gorge below Lake George and the historic river channel below Lake Louise. Based on sediment mapping and measurement of the bedrock surfaces along with available topographic maps, it appears that a series of cascades, each dropping between 4-6 feet, will occur over several hundred feet from upstream of the Winter Street bridge to the confluence of the South Fork. A similar drop is also expected in the vicinity of Powell Falls. See conceptual renderings.

What is being done to ensure that the townships in the upper watershed are establishing regulations to address stormwater storage and infiltration and to control agricultural erosion using buffers, in an effort to reduce sediment coming down the upper Kinni?
Beginning in the early 1990s, the four townships adjoining the City participated with River Falls in the development of the Kinnickinnic River Watershed Planning process referred to as the "205j Plan." Similarly, the townships were at the table when the state-funded Priority Watershed Plan for the Kinnickinnic River was developed in 1998. The townships and counties will continue to play an important role in the future health of the river that comes to and through the City. Private groups like the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust will also play a significant role.

Upstream of River Falls, what will prevent agricultural runoff from contributing sediment and nutrients Lake George?
Threats to the Kinnickinnic River upstream of the City, including agricultural runoff, remain a series concern for the long-term health of the river through and below the City. The Priority Watershed Plan completed in the late 1999s created a strategy to being to address some of these threats. The City will continue to work with neighboring townships and St. Croix County to ensure that all land use activities and water withdrawal proceed with the health of the river in mind.

Will utility crossings be affected by dam removal?
There are several utility crossings that will need to be evaluated and either protected or reconstructed as part of a dam removal project.

Will the wastewater treatment plant outlet be affected?
The wastewater treatment plant will not be affected, however, depending on the final level of Lake Louise or a restored river in the vicinity of the plant in a dam removal scenario, some modification to the outlet may be required to prevent scour and other impacts of a lowered river profile compared to today.

V. Cost, Financing, and Economics

Where did the $300,000 for this study come from?
The $300,000 for the Kinni Corridor Study was budgeted by the City of River Falls, with 50% from the electric fund and 50% from property taxes.

Is the relicensing decision contingent on funding?
No, however the cost of maintaining or removing the dams are two important factors to be considered as part of the licensing decision. Both relicense and surrender costs have similar regulations and administrative costs.

At what point do we need to secure funding?
Funding for plan implementation would not be sought until after the decision regarding licensing (February 2018) and after subsequent decisions regarding the disposition of the two dams and community input on the corridor plan.

***How much will electric rates go up if the dams are removed and restoration is complete?**
Rate increases due to dam and/or hydro generation removal have not been calculated. An increase in rates could relate to the City's desire to recover lost hydroelectric revenues over time, amortization of undepreciated assets, and recovery of the costs of dam removal. In 2016, the City's net revenues (electricity sold from hydro generation less maintenance costs) from the sale of 2.1 million kWh was $125,840. The cost to replace the same kWh with purchased power would be $165,233, resulting in net revenues of $40,807.

What costs besides the relicensing costs might we be required to cover once a license is granted?
If the license is granted, the City will continue to address all maintenance and operations costs relative to the two hydro facilities. It is anticipated that at some point within the 30-year license period that one of the two dams will undergo structural rehabilitation in order to keep the facility in proper operating condition. These costs would be included in a future City Capital Improvement Plan as part of the City's normal budgeting process. The costs of the facility are depreciated over the life of the structure and the license period.

What is the likelihood that the Army Corp of Engineers will engage in a dam removal project?
The United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) has several programs that involve funding and technical assistant that may be applicable to a dam removal project. One example is Section 206 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996 related to Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration. The 206 program for example would include both funding and technical service (design) by the ACE. The involvement of the ACE would be dependent on availability of federal funding as well as the availability of the local cost share which might vary from 35 - 50%.

Does the City recognize that the hydros will need to be replaced at some point? Are we saving money for this eventuality?
The financial projects for the future of hydro operations include anticipated maintenance and repair of both dams through the next licensing period.

What are some of the overall costs of dams that are removed of the same size as the dams in River Falls?
There are too many variables to make an apples to apples comparison of the costs of removing a dam of the same height or width as the Junction Falls or Powell Falls dams.

How many city maintenance jobs will be gained or lost with removing the dams?
No city maintenance jobs are expected to be lost in a dam removal scenario. The City may need to add seasonal help to maintain the repurposed reservoir areas in a post-dam removal scenario.

What is the increased cost of dam removal to a City taxpayer per $100,000 of house value?
The cost to City taxpayers will depend on the overall costs for removal and restoration, as well as the amount of public and private dollars that may be available to reduce the City's cost share for the project.

What type of private funding might be available in River Falls? Cash or in-kind (construction)?
Depending on the types of improvements being considered, there are a variety of sources of private funds that can be sought to reduce the City's costs for the projects. Contributions could include a combination of cash and in-kind services, but it is unlikely that there would be much private construction effort.

When the City evaluates its hydroelectric profits and losses, why doesn't the City include all the costs that it has to pay out?
The financial reports that the City has kept are based on the reporting it is required to make relative the operation of the hydro facilities. Historically, the City has not allocated overhead costs related to labor and benefits, and other costs to the hydro facilities. The City is reviewing what the applicable costs would be if it was to report such costs as part of the next generation of financial analysis of the hydro operations.

What costs will we need to incur for future maintenance to our dams? What state are they in, what repairs and needed and when? How much will they cost and who is responsible for paying for them?
Based on the inspection reports completed in 2009, both dams are in reasonable shape. In 2015, the City reviewed the condition of the Powell Falls dam and estimated the cost of making minor repairs to the concrete structure to be approximately $125,000. The City is responsible to pay for the maintenance of both facilities.

Exactly which taxpayers bear the brunt of this project – City of River Falls, County?
The answer depends in part on how many different sources of funding are available. The City taxpayers will be a primary source of funding. In addition, there may be contributions from Pierce and St. Croix County, State of Wisconsin, and the federal government.

Based on a $12 million expenditure for dam removal, what is the anticipated property tax impact for the home owner?
The cost to City taxpayers will depend on the overall costs for removal and restoration, as well as the amount of public and private dollars that may be available to reduce the City's cost share for the project. The July 2017 estimate of dam removal cost came in at over $12 million. That number is expected to evolve over the next several months. Once there is greater refinement of potential costs as well as the potential sources of funding the impact on homeowners can be estimated.

VI. Tourism, Recreation, and Economic Development

Would dam removal enhance development and bring more tourists into the City?
Existing studies from other dam removal and stream restoration projects would suggest that the City would be likely to attract more visitors. However, in many of the precedent studies, the existing streams were badly degraded and it was the enhancement of the stream that helped increase tourism. The Kinni is already a regional destination. The corridor plan itself could also be the catalyst for increasing tourism in River Falls. An economic impact study could be one tool for better quantifying what this might look like.

How will the City account for increased trash in the river from canoers and kayakers – increased damage to the area from people who are using the river for free?

This is a current issue and would be expected to increase if access and recreation opportunities are increased because of the corridor plan, with or without dam removal. Education, receptacles, and increase maintenance may be required.

What economic impact studies will be done as part of corridor planning?
No economic impact studies are currently planned for by the City prior to the charrette. Once the charrette generates alternatives for the future of the corridor, cost analysis of those alternatives will be developed. In addition, there has been interest on the part of several private parties to complete an independent economic impact study to inform the relicensing decision scheduled for February 2018.

Does dam removal reduce the recreational activities to only being a river community that is only accessed by fly fisherman and kayakers?
Not necessarily. Hiking, bird watching and other activities remain or may be enhanced.

How does dam removal benefit the general population of the City?
The benefits related to dam removal include enhancing the long-term health and viability of the river and maintaining/improving local economic conditions related to recreation and tourism.

What is the projected increase in revenue to local businesses (for their benefit)?
The positive economic impact to local businesses in a dam removal scenario can only be estimated based on current visitors to the City and an estimated number of increased visits following dam removal. The economic impacts are currently being reviewed.

What are the potential economic benefits of a restored river with rapids, waterfalls, stormwater infiltration ponds, and park system along the river?
A specific economic impact statement has not been prepared at this time. The planning charrette will define several alternatives for the river corridor and the vision for the river and the reservoirs. Once complete, and economic analysis could be developed.

What are the economic and recreational impacts of dam removal?
Dam removal, and the stream restoration that is associated with dam removal, will enhance the long-term health and viability of the river. The river is already a center of recreational opportunities for fishing, kayaking, hiking, bird watching, etc. The stream restoration relates to about less than a mile of the river. To the extent that there can be a significant increase in

visitors seeking the recreational opportunities throughout the corridor, local business could expect to see a positive economic change.

How will the corridor plan consider the needs of active people looking to retire in an interactive community?
The answer depends on the alternatives generated as part of the charrette. Based on current community feedback, the plan will likely emphasis a more walkable corridor, enhancement to the Riverwalk area and improved access to the river at a variety of locations.

How can we balance/regulate/share the use of the river so that it does not end up like the Apple River in Somerset?
Using a comparison to another river utilization like the Apple River can help to frame the future vision for the river and the entire corridor. Assuming that River Falls does not want to end up like Somerset, there would need to be use/access controls to ensure the proper balance of recreational users on a daily and on a seasonal basis.

In terms of attracting youth to the community, should we focus on permanent residents or temporary recreational use visitors?
The answer depends on the community's vision for the future of River Falls. The right answer is some combination of both.

How big do we want the City to grow? When do we get too big? At what point do we become too large and lose our uniqueness?
This is a question that the community and the Council wrestle with and will continue to wrestle with in the future. There will never be uniform agreement on the right size for River Falls. But planning efforts like the Corridor Plan help define a future state for the community that will help to answer the growth question going forward.

How do you overcome zoning regulations in order to build or have a restaurant on the river bank as shown in some of the images during Tech Talk No. 6? How can real estate development exist if zoning will not permit it on or near the river?
The image, like a handful of properties in River Falls, shows an existing building on the stream bank which has been in place long before the current zoning and buffer requirements were put into place. It is highly unlikely that new development built directly on the bank of any river would meet with approval in any community. That said, zoning can be used to encourage the types of development that can enhance the community and strike a balance between protecting the river buffer and providing access and proximity to the resource, consistent with local, regional and state regulation.

Do kayak rental companies, either locally based or from the Twin Cities, pay any access or user fees to use City-funded access points? If not, should they?
No user or access fees are currently paid to the City for anyone accessing the river across City properties. At present, there are no near-term plans to develop and access related user-fee system.

Zoning is a way to move from negative to positive. How can we assist local development of the built environment to enhance our community if zoning prohibits this?
It is important that zoning aligns with community plans for development as well as resource protection. Zoning is often viewed negatively when it restricts development. Relative to the corridor plan, tools like overlay zoning which may promote flexibility and conditional uses may be part of the answer to help realize the community vision.

What percentage of the kayakers, taking 2 or 4 hour trips, actually rent hotels for their trips? Don't the vast majority either live locally or get bussed in for one day?
Specific information regarding kayakers' activities are not currently available. This information could be collected as part of an economic impact study. It is likely that a significant number of kayakers visit the City on a daily basis and do not generate a lot of business for area hotels.

VII. Lake George and Lake Louise

How would the land reclaimed around Lake George and Lake Louise be used?
In a dam removal scenario, the land that 'emerges' after the lake drawdown that is not within the floodplain could be repurposed consistent with City and state buffers and setbacks. The corridor planning process will develop alternatives for how these areas might be redeveloped if the dams were removed.

How will the City account for sediment that is stirred up so that it doesn't pollute downstream?
The sediment study prepared by for the City in 2016 indicated that there is a very low risk for health issues or pollution occurring because of the sediment in Lake George and Lake Louise.

Is Lake George providing storm water management capabilities to the Kinni currently? Or is the sediment too high currently to provide such benefits?
Lake George is generally colder than the stormwater which enters the lake during the first flush of runoff during a summer storm event. The lake reduces the thermal spike from stormwater flows, but warm rain water still flows into the river. The reservoir also retains coarse sediments and associated pollutants in the vicinity of each stormwater outfall. The lake is fairly shallow, which limits its effectiveness for retaining finer sediments and soluble pollutants. Generally, the lakes have limited positive stormwater management benefits in their current state.

What costs will we need to incur for future maintenance to the dams? What state are they in, what repairs and needed and when? How much will they cost and who is responsible for paying for them?
Based on the inspection reports completed in 2009 and 2017, both dams are in good shape. In 2015, the City reviewed the condition of the Powell Falls Dam and estimated the cost of making minor repairs to the concrete structure to be approximately $125,000. The City is responsible to pay for the maintenance of both facilities. The costs are recorded and depreciated over time to be recovered in the rates of the utility.

***The Lake George Restoration Plan represented an idea for improving Lake George and discharging colder water to Lake Louise without removing the Junction Falls dam. Why didn't the project move forward?**
The plan called for the construction of storm water interceptor (a large pipe) to collect runoff from numerous individual outfalls along the east side of the river from Lake George north to Division Street. The interceptor would discharge into a series of ponds created within the area that is now Lake George to improve the thermal and chemical conditions of the runoff before discharging it back into the river. The multi-million-dollar concept did not move forward due to a lack of funding and unsuccessful attempts to secure grant funding.

Who owns the land under the mill ponds?
The City of River Falls owns all the property under Lake Louise and Lake George.

Will removal of Lake George and Lake Louise impact the trout food chain (less mayfly hatch and other food sources)?
Removal of the dams will change the trout food chain in the lower Kinni. In the short term, some negative effects will occur from sedimentation, etc. The temperature will become colder over time in the lower river which will also change stream habitat for trout and aquatic invertebrates. Some changes may be negative and some will be positive. Simply said, it will be different than it is today.

I heard that 35 years ago, a company, Volrath, put mercury in Lake George – what has happened to this mercury?
No information is readily available to address this question at this time. Further investigation is required. However, there is no evidence that Volrath put mercury into Lake George.

How would replacing Lake George and Lake Louise with 1,000 feet of additional river improve either the trout systems or hotel room stays over and above the nature experiences that are already here?
The stream restoration generally associated with dam removal and the replacement of Lake George ad Lake Louise involves over 4,000 feet of additional river. The restoration would lower and stabilize the temperatures of the lower river, which would improve river ecology and trout habitat specifically. In addition, newly restored or created habitat in the 4,000 feet of stream restoration will improve trout habitat as well. For some, this change will enhance the nature experiences already present in the City. For others, the loss of the impoundments may be viewed as a loss of nature experience for those who enjoy the passive recreational opportunities offers by the reservoirs. The City does not have current information regarding hotel stays in River Falls so it is difficult to project how that may change as a result of a stream restoration project.

VIII. Hydroelectric Facilities

If these dams did not exist, would FERC approve building dams in these locations?
The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources would regulate the construction a new dam regardless of location. Other local, state and federal Agencies would also be involved including FERC who would approve the hydroelectric facilities through their licensing process. That said, it is unlikely that any dam could be constructed today on a Class I trout stream.

Are the relicensing costs included in the City's preliminary financial analysis?
The preliminary financial analysis includes $300,000 in relicensing costs between 2018 and 2020.

there opportunities for other upgrades to the generators to increase their capacity to further increase the value of the dams?
Undoubtedly there are equipment upgrades that could be considered to increase the output of the hydro facilities, however no such analysis has been completed to date.

Should we keep the hydros so we can power our community in the situation where our major power source is cut off for some reason?
It is both smart and practical for the City to have the ability to provide some power to the community if there is an interruption in the primary power supplies to the City.

What is the historic value of the hydro facilities? Is the original dam historic i.e. National Historic Register?
No recent work has been done to assess the historical nature of the dams, the hydroelectric facilities, or the original timber dam.

IX. Precedent Projects

What is happening with the dam on the Willow River in North Hudson?
In 2016 the DNR decided to rebuild the Little Falls dam to restore Little Falls Lake. The $19 million project includes removal of the existing dam and reconstruction of a new dam that will restore the 172-acre reservoir.

What is the economic experience of other communities that have removed dams, such as Chagrin Falls, Ohio and Baraboo, Wisconsin?
In general, many of the regional and national dam removal projects result in the restoration of a degraded waterway. The restoration incudes re-establishment of native fisheries and natural flood plains and riparian properties. What makes the Kinni different is that the lower river is not expected to improve significantly because of dam removal as it is already a Class I river and is already a regional and national destination, making the economic experiences of other communities hard to project onto River Falls.

Are there any dam removals examples in other communities that you can share?
There are many dam removal examples to review. Three examples were summarized on a poster of precedent projects for Tech Talk No. 5 and can be viewed here.