

LOCALNEWS

Dam spillway focus of assessment

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

To help determine the amount of water leaking through the spillways of the International Dam spanning Rainy River, H2O Power and Boise Inc. will use dye as part of an ongoing maintenance program of its hydro facilities.

Marc Mantha, vice president, operations, H2O Power, told The Journal that the tests of the spillway this week is a part of the periodic inspections of the dam.

Much of the maintenance program is internal to the two powerhouses, maintaining the generators, turbines and controls.

This year, part of that program includes an examination of the spillway gates located on the Canadian side of the dam.

Mantha said attention has been focused on the amount of leakage through the spillway gates over the past couple of years. While some leakage has been visible, there has been some uncertainty as to the real amount.

He said what may appear to some as a large stream may in fact be a relatively small leak that is well diffused

and sprays out to appear larger.

“As hydro operators, H2O Power and Boise would naturally like to eliminate all the leakage from the spillway gates,” said Mantha. “Reduced leakage on the spillway would translate to improved energy production. However, being timber structure gates, that goal is stretching the bounds of practicality.”

The dye test being run this week will help quantify the leakage and allow the companies to plan for maintenance on the spill gates, he said.

The execution of the test involves injecting a small quantity of rhodamine dye immediately upstream of the spill gates and measuring the concentration just downstream of the gates. The rate at which the concentration increases correlates to the leakage rate, explained Mantha.

What may be visible to the public will be a reddish tint in the water as the dye disperses downstream. The dye is an environmentally inert product and is essentially comparable to food coloring, he said.

KCCTV seeks grants for software

Local meetings being aired, with more expected

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

The International Falls Cable Commission is seeking grants that will allow the local cable access channel to offer more programming.

Koochiching County Community Television, known as KCCTV, is working to gain grants that will allow it to purchase editing and scheduling software, Cable Commission Chairwoman Cynthia Jaksa told The Journal. Jaksa is also an International Falls city councilor.

She said the commission will seek nonprofit status which will allow it to seek other funding.

“We have to get enough to get the software,” said Jaksa, “which means we can more efficiently get programming on KCCTV.”

Now, she said programming must be physically added with a disc. And, because the process is so cumbersome, the channel cannot be offered to other people to add programming. The software would allow programming to be loaded and running at all times, she said.

The International Falls City Council last week adopted an operating agreement between the commission and KCCTV, as well as bylaws for the commission. KCCTV has been film-

ing International Falls City Council and Economic Development Authority Commission meetings using cameras from the International Falls Public Library, which are available for use by the public. However, Jaksa said, a sound issue is making it difficult to listen to the meetings, including the first Path Forward Committee meeting held to discuss the impact of layoffs at the Boise Inc. paper mill.

Jaksa said a membership drive is planned for this fall to help raise money to gain the needed equipment.

“It’s slow,” she said of creating the cable access channel envisioned by the commission. “We’re waiting for the money to get stuff done, but it’s happening.”

She called community members involved in KCCTV and the commission a terrific group of people who have donated hours of time, effort and expertise, as well as furniture and equipment.

She also credited the Backus Community Center, and its board and staff, which she said has “been tremendous. They have given us a discount to rent there and Ward (Merrill, executive director) is golden in his touch, he has helped with grants. It’s a big team process.”

The city of International Falls has provided

\$10,000 to KCCTV. “It is well spent,” she said. “It is being used to leverage other resources.”

She said several churches in the community are eager to use the equipment to allow people unable to attend to take part in services, but she said that must wait until the software is in place. In addition, she said local football games are expected to be offered for viewing on KCCTV after the games are complete, so that attendance is not impacted.

Jaksa said a mental health panel program was aired during a recognition month, but it did take time to get up and running.

“We’re moving along pretty good considering we just organized the board last summer,” she said.

Jaksa said the goal is to offer the use of the camera equipment to the public who may film activities and meetings and submit it to KCCTV.

“We will have guidelines of what we accept,” she said. “We’re managing it so the public good is preserved.”

She said KCCTV has a website and a Facebook page, she noted.

The commission has studied how other community access channels in northern Minnesota are operated and funded. She noted that the channel in Grand Rapids, which she called incredible, operates with a \$300,000 budget and is funded in part through a franchise fee.

A franchise fee to fund KCCTV was considered by

the council a few years ago, but rejected because of the timing.

Jaksa said the cable commission will renegotiate the city’s franchise agreement with Midcontinent Communications in the coming year. “We will be looking at other contracts,” she said. “We want to get some stuff, but ultimately the council has to approve the agreement.”

The public access channel in International Falls must overcome a bad reputation, she said. “The thing has been virtually dead for years, so we need to get something up that has legs,” said Jaksa.

Jaksa said she understands that the media delivery system in the world is changing, with the advent of electronic offerings, but believes that a public access channel can reach many people in Borderland.

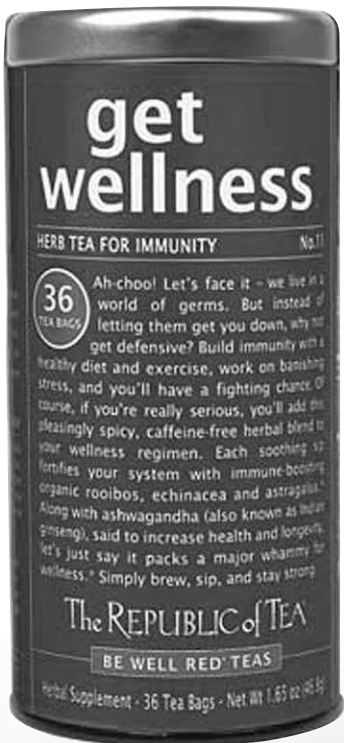
And she said additional resources are needed to develop KCCTV’s website into one that can be downloaded and uploaded with programming.

“Now, we need to buy internet service, and that’s at least \$200 per month,” she said. “We don’t have it in budget yet, so we’re limping along on Backus wireless that they are kind enough to provide us.”

But an active website, she said, will not only reach across Koochiching County, but across the whole nation allowing recorded county board meetings, planned for the future, to be viewed by people anywhere via the website.



Cynthia Jaksa




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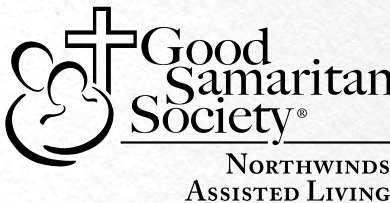
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