

# **SHAFER & FREEMAN LAKES ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION CORPORATION**

**(SFLECC)**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONTICELLO, INDIANA

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The U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is coming to Monticello for the purpose of conducting a public hearing with lake residents and officials advocating on behalf of the Shafer Freeman Lakes Environmental Conservation Corporation's "Keep the Lakes Level" initiative. FERC has scheduled a public hearing on May 10, 2016 from 6pm to 9pm at the Sportsman Inn. "This really is good news", commented SFLECC President Lee Kreul, 'we hope that the agencies involved are closer to a final solution."

The purpose of the public meeting is to give the public and stakeholders another opportunity to provide comments on Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) the Commission issued in October, 2015 as a result of the protest filed by the SFLECC. The community will have the opportunity to share evidence of the negative impact that the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) 2014 mandate to lower the lakes in order to protect endangered mussel species has inflicted on the local economy and environment of the lakes. Earlier in the day, FERC will also meet with representatives of NIPSCO, FWS, SFLECC, IDNR and local officials at a "technical conference". The technical meeting is primarily designed for resource agencies and non-governmental organizations.

In August 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) mandated NIPSCO to release 500 cfs of water at Oakdale Dam and lower Lake Freeman for the purpose of maintaining water levels over the downstream habitat of federally endangered mussels during dry weather. Alarmed at the low lake levels, property owners turned to the SFLECC, and with the support of state and local officials, the SFLECC compiled the scientific evidence required to support and file a protest. FERC responded to the protest with its Draft Environmental Assessment that largely concurred with SFLECC 's contention that the methodology (linear scaling) used by Fish and Wildlife Services in its Technical Assessment Letter (TAL) had no scientific merit and did little to protect the endangered mussel species in the lower Tippecanoe River. The Commission found that the FWS' mandate that required NIPSCO to operate Oakdale Dam at 500 cfs was not representative of "run-of-the-river" conditions and "drawdowns would result in frequent and substantial adverse effects on other environmental resources associated with Lake Freeman." (EA Executive Summary vi, paragraph 3).

Lakes Task Force Chairman, John Koppelman said he wants to thank FERC for “its reasoned and scientific conclusions in the DEA and then welcome them to view our beautiful lakes and hear firsthand how the FWS mandate negatively affected the environment and property around Lake Freeman.”

SFLECC Executive Director Joe Roach, stated “Our position is a win-win for the lakes and the mussels. The evidence we submitted concluded that a natural run-of-the-river flow through the dam, along with NIPSCO’s cessation of electrical generation during dry spells, achieves the optimal environment for the nesting grounds of the mussels and stabilizes the lake levels.”

Seating for the public meeting on May 10<sup>th</sup> from 6pm-9pm is limited. Registration is not required and seating will be on a first-come basis. Information on both meetings can be found on the SFLECC website at [www.sflecc.org](http://www.sflecc.org) or by calling the SFLECC office at 574-583-9784 or emailing [info@sflecc.com](mailto:info@sflecc.com).

FERC’s draft document can be found at the SFLECC’s website at [www.sflecc.org](http://www.sflecc.org).

*ABOUT SFLECC – The Shafer & Freeman Lakes Environmental Conservation Corporation was formed in 1994 to take title to Lake Freeman and Shafer shorelines and other nearby properties owned by NIPSCO. It is a non-profit corporation whose Articles of Incorporation state its mission is “to promote environmentally sound use of Lake Shafer and Lake Freeman. The corporation will conduct itself in a way to protect and enhance the environment and the water quality of these lakes in order to facilitate public recreational use. The Corporation will accomplish this purpose through various activities, including but not limited to, the issuance and administration of permits for the use of shoreline property, the testing of the water quality, monitoring shoreline quality and ensuring continued public access.” The SFLECC Board of Directors meets at 7:00PM on the third Thursday of each month at the White County Memorial Hospital. Meetings are open to the public.*