

WEIR EFFECTS ON WATER LEVELS UNDER THE SANDBRIDGE ROAD BRIDGE

QUESTION: my concern with the weir project is the water level rising. Right now, in order to get out to Back Bay, it is a close fit going under the Sandbridge Road Bridge. If the water level rose anymore than it is, my boat won't be able to fit under and the property values in Ocean Lakes would go down as the selling point of "deep water access" would no longer be there.

USFWS RESPONSE: good question and valid concern. The weirs will not affect the range of tidal fluctuation or depth under the bridge primarily due to their location off the canal two miles north, or upstream, of the bridge. Another major reason is the top of the weirs would be 8 inches lower than the maximum lake water depth recorded in 2008 so at the upper range of water depth, which is of your concern, the weirs would be submerged. Hydrologists tell us submerged berms and weirs are of no consequence to an area's water depth. So the weir's distance from the bridge, being submerged, and being located on the lake and off the canal will keep them from having any effect on water depths under the Sandbridge Road bridge.

Others have expressed concern that the weirs will prevent incoming tide waters from being absorbed by Lake Tecumseh thereby raising the water level under the bridge. This will not occur because the lake will still absorb tide and flood waters at the upper depth range when the weirs (at elevation 1.8) become submerged. Our canal data from 2001 and 2004 indicates the water rises above elevation 3 during many times of the year. Logically though this really has no bearing because it ultimately is the Bay level, not the Lake, that dictates how high the water is under the bridge since the bridge is so much closer to the Bay than the Lake. Sure it might momentarily be higher under the bridge as the Bay begins draining south during a northerly wind direction but the canal level would soon drop also as the basin drains.

Our position is that the weirs will not affect negatively property values and perhaps will enhance those values of properties in Sandbridge having water access to Lake Tecumseh. The data shows that in 2008 the weirs would have provided an addition 193 days of boatable water depths on the lake, an increase of 53% for the year. So during periods when the canal and Bay were too low to boat, the lake would have been available for those residents in Sandbridge community having waterfront access. These residents will experience the added inconvenience of the boat roll-over which in turn will maintain, rather than decrease, their property values and access to the Bay.