**LOW WATER: Disagreement Over Little Wall Lake**

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Little Wall Lake is getting littler.

“It’s not supposed to be a beach, but it is, now,” says Jeff Knutson, walking along the pebble-strewn shore near his lakeside home in Hamilton County.

Two years of drought have dropped the water level more than a foot hurting boating.

“A lot of the lake is now 2-3 feet deep,” he says, ”so your prop is basically running in the muck.”

Knutson and his wife Jane Todey lead the group “Friends of Little Wall Lake” and have petitioned the Iowa DNR for a permit to refill the lake…quickly gathering signatures from more than 700 people.

“About three-quarters of them wanted to use it in more than one way,” says Todey, about the 256-acre lake, ”so more than just fishing, more than just hunting, more than just power-boating.”

They’ve refilled it in the past using a pump they paid for and installed along a branch of the South Skunk River. “The second year we ran it 40 days,” says Knutson, ”we actually brought it up about 36 inches. So we put three feet on this lake.”

But the DNR says that was a special circumstance. “We had dredged the lake,” says Mike McGhee, the lake restoration project manager for the Iowa DNR, ”and you lose some volume, some water volume when you dredge, there so we were pumping to regain some of that volume.” The lake has had many modifications over the years — from dredgings to shore structures — and it’s now time to leave the lake alone.

Permit denied.

“We didn’t feel like there was a need to pump because this fluctuation is important, really, for natural lakes,” McGhee says. ”Additionally, we have the water quality, not just water quantity concerns.”

Water quality is a constant struggle in Iowa, and recreation is sometimes a casualty.  Everyone seems to agree this is a big statewide issue, even at Little Wall Lake.