

## Officials change plans on canal pumping

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**METAMORA** — A set of underground pumps may still be installed by state officials to add water to the portion of the Whitewater Canal running through Metamora. But contrary to the plan outlined at a public meeting Dec. 8, Indiana Department of Natural Resources officials now say the pumps won't be the canal's only source of water, and they won't replace the flow from the Laurel Feeder Dam.

"We're not looking at replacing the original water source," said DNR Communications Director Stephen Sellers. "A supplemental system will help the cause greatly."

American Consulting, an Indi-

anapolis-based engineering firm, was hired last week by the DNR to study water sources to the canal and devise a cost-effective solution before the DNR makes any further decisions, Sellers said.

Currently, the 14-mile portion of the Whitewater Canal running through Metamora on its way from Laurel to Brookville is kept flowing mainly with water from the West Fork of the Whitewater River, entering the canal through the Laurel Feeder Dam. The canal has operated in that manner since it opened in 1836, adding to the site's historical significance.

Increased sedimentation over the years has impeded flow from the dam. The water level in the portion of the canal running past Main Street in Metamora is often

very low, and the water itself is usually brown and cloudy. Regular efforts to remove built-up sediment in the dam are costly and time-consuming, DNR administrators have said, leading the DNR to consider other methods of operation.

The operation method outlined at the public meeting Dec. 8 in the Metamora Firehouse consisted of three groundwater pumps installed about half a mile away from Metamora. The pumps would keep enough water in the canal to operate the grist mill and tour boat in Metamora, and would not operate all year. The water supply from the feeder dam and upper portion of the canal would be abandoned.

Jay Dishman, property manager of the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site, said information gath-

ered since the meeting has indicated the canal is receiving more water flow than researchers realized. Though they may end up using pumps as a supplemental water source, Dishman said plans are leaning toward continuing use of the feeder dam.

"It doesn't look like we're going to do it," Dishman said. "It's being reconsidered, and it's being reconsidered because of the cost factor."

At the time of the first meeting, no long-term study of the canal had been conducted by state officials, Dishman said, and the DNR wants to gather more information before moving forward. Another public meeting between the DNR and local residents will probably take place in October, Dishman said.