

## CHAPTER 31.

## REGULATION OF DAMS AND BRIDGES AFFECTING NAVIGABLE WATERS.

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**31.01 Definitions.** Terms used in this chapter are defined as follows:

- (1) "Commission" means the public service commission of Wisconsin.
- (2) "Navigable waters" means all waters declared navigable by chapter 30 of these statutes.
- (3) "Permit", unless the context otherwise requires, means legislative permission granted under s. 31.06 to construct, operate and maintain a dam in or across navigable waters, or under s. 31.08 to continue the operation and maintenance of any dam so situated which was constructed before such legislative permits were required.
- (4) "Grantee" means the person, firm, corporation or municipality to whom a permit is granted, and all subsequent owners of the grant.
- (5) "Corporation" means a private corporation organized under the laws of this state.
- (6) "Municipality" means any town, village, city or county in the state.

**History:** 1961 c. 568.

**31.02 Powers of commission.** (1) The commission, in the interest of public rights in navigable waters or to promote safety and protect life, health and property is empowered to regulate and control the level and flow of water in all navigable waters and may erect, or may order and require bench marks to be erected, upon which shall be designated the maximum level of water that may be impounded and the lowest level of water that may be maintained by any dam heretofore or hereafter constructed and maintained and which will affect the level and flow of navigable waters; and may by order fix a level for any body of navigable water below which the same shall not be lowered except as provided in this chapter; and shall establish and maintain gauging stations upon the various navigable waters of the state and shall take other steps necessary to determine and record the characteristics of such waters.

(2) The commission is vested with authority and power to investigate and determine all reasonable methods of construction, operation, maintenance, and equipment for any dam so as to conserve and protect all public rights in navigable waters and so as to protect life, health and property; and the construction, operation, maintenance and equipment, or any or all thereof, of dams in navigable waters shall be subject to the supervision of the commission and to the orders and regulations of the commission made or promulgated under the provisions of this chapter of the statutes.

(3) The commission or any member or any agent or employe thereof shall at all times be accorded free access to any and all parts of any dam and appurtenances constructed or maintained in navigable waters and may enter upon any property to investigate a waterway or use of water from any lake or stream.

(4) The commission may order and require any dam heretofore or hereafter constructed to be equipped and operated, in whole or part, as follows:

- (a) With slides and chutes for the passage of logs and timber products.
- (b) With a lock, boat hoist, marine railway or other device of a size and construction sufficient to accommodate navigation.
- (c) With good and sufficient fishway or fishways, or in lieu thereof the owner may be permitted to enter into an agreement with the conservation commission to pay for or to supply to the state of Wisconsin annually such quantities of game fish for stocking purposes as may be agreed upon by the owner and the conservation commission.
- (d) With spillways or flood gates capable of permitting the passage through or over the same of freshets and floods during all seasons of the year.
- (e) With booms, piers or other protection works ample to safeguard flood gates from trash or other floating material.

**History:** 1961 c. 35.

**31.03 Public utilities law applicable.** In exercising its powers and performing its duties under this chapter the commission shall be guided and controlled also by the powers with which it is invested by sections 196.01 to 197.10, so far as such sections are applicable.

**31.04 Permits for dams.** Permits to construct, operate and maintain dams may be granted to persons, corporations or municipalities under the provisions of this chapter.

**31.05 Applications for permits to construct.** Any person, firm, corporation or municipality desiring a permit to construct, operate and maintain a dam shall file with the commission a written application therefor, setting forth:

(1) The name of the navigable waters in or across which a dam is proposed to be constructed and a specific description of the site for the proposed dam.

(2) The purpose or purposes for which the proposed dam is to be constructed, operated and maintained.

(3) In case the application is for a permit to construct, operate and maintain a dam for a private purpose, proof satisfactory to the commission that the applicant owns or has an enforceable option to purchase the described dam site and at least 65 per cent of the land to be flowed, or the flowage rights on at least 65 per cent of such land. This subsection shall not apply to a person who has the power of eminent domain.

(4) A general description of the proposed dam, of the material to be used in the construction thereof, and a general description of all booms, piers, and other protection works to be constructed in connection therewith.

(5) The approximate amount of hydraulic power that the proposed dam is capable of developing.

(6) The location of the nearest city or village and of the nearest existing dam above and below the site of the proposed dam.

(7) A map on the scale of not less than four inches to the mile showing the lands that may be affected by the construction, operation or maintenance of the proposed dam, or by any flowage that may be caused thereby and approximately the outline of such flowage, which map shall indicate the ownership of each tract of land within the flowage.

(8) Such additional information of any nature that may be required by the commission.

**History:** 1961 c. 568.

**31.06 Hearing.** (1) Upon receipt of an application for a permit the commission shall fix a time, not more than 8 weeks thereafter, and a convenient place, for a public hearing thereon; it shall also give notice of such time and place to the applicant who shall cause the same to be published once each week for 3 successive weeks before such hearing in at least one newspaper, designated by the commission, in each county in which riparian lands will be affected by the proposed dam; it shall also give notice of such time and place to the county clerk or clerks of the county or counties in which the proposed dam and flowage created thereby are located.

(2) In addition to such publication the applicant, not less than 20 days prior to such hearing, shall mail to every person interested in any lands that will be affected by the proposed dam and whose post-office address can by due diligence be ascertained, notice of the time and place set for such hearing. This notice shall be accompanied by a general statement of the nature of the application and shall be forwarded to such persons by registered mail in a sealed and postpaid envelope properly addressed. Proof of such publication and notice shall be filed, with the commission.

(3) At such hearing or any adjournment thereof the commission shall consider the application, and shall take evidence offered by the applicant and other persons in support thereof or in opposition thereto, may require the amendment of the application, and

if it appears that the construction, operation or maintenance of the proposed dam will not materially obstruct existing navigation or violate other public rights and will not endanger life, health or property, the commission shall so find and a permit is hereby granted to the applicant, provided the commission also finds that the applicant has complied with s. 31.14 (2) or (3) and, where applicable, with s. 31.05 (3), based on the commission's own estimate of the area of the flowage. The enjoyment of natural scenic beauty is declared to be a public right to be considered along with other public rights and the economic need of electric power for the full development of agricultural and industrial activity and other useful purposes in the area to be served. In considering public rights to the recreational use and natural scenic beauty of the river, the commission shall investigate the potentialities of the lake and lake shore created by the flowage and shall weigh the recreational use and scenic beauty thereof against the known recreational use and scenic beauty of the river in its natural state, and the commission shall further weigh the known recreational use and scenic beauty of the particular section of river involved against the known recreational use and scenic beauty of other sections of the same river and other rivers in the area remaining in their natural state (without regard to plans of other dams subsequently filed or to be filed); if it appears that the river in its natural state offers greater recreational facilities and scenic value for a larger number of people than can be obtained from the use of the lake and lake shore and that the remaining sections of the river and other rivers in the area in their natural state provide an insufficient amount of recreational facilities and scenic beauty, and if it further appears that the economic need of electric power is less than the value of the recreational and scenic beauty advantages of such river in its natural state, the commission shall so find and the permit be denied, provided that in the case of a dam or flowage located outside the boundaries of a state park or state forest the commission shall accept the findings of the county board provided for in sub. (4), if made within 50 days after notice to the county clerk as provided in sub. (1) and concurred in by all county boards in which the proposed dam and flowage created thereby are located, unless such findings of the county board are contrary to the preponderance of the evidence introduced before the commission.

(4) Not more than 20 days after receiving notice as provided in sub. (1) each county clerk may and upon request of the chairman of the county board shall give written notice as provided in s. 59.04 (2) of a special meeting of the county board to be held at a time and place set by the county clerk, not less than 2 weeks nor more than 3 weeks after mailing of such notice, for the purpose of making findings as hereinafter provided, and shall give notice of the time, place and purpose of such special meeting to the commission and to the applicant, who shall cause the same to be published at least one week before such special meeting in at least one newspaper in the county, and who shall cause a copy thereof to be mailed at least 7 days prior to such special meeting to every person interested in any lands that will be affected by the proposed dam and whose post-office address can be ascertained. Proof of such publication and notice shall be filed with the county clerk. At such special meeting the county board shall hear evidence offered by the applicant and other persons and shall find and determine by a majority vote of the county board members-elect whether the lake and lake shore created by the flowage or the river in its natural state offers greater recreational facilities and scenic beauty value for the larger number of people. The county clerk shall forthwith certify such finding and determination to the commission. The jurisdiction and findings of each county board shall apply to that part of the proposed dam and flowage which is within the county.

**History:** 1961 c. 568.

**31.07 Applications for permits to operate and maintain existing dams.** Any person, firm, corporation or municipality desiring a permit to operate and maintain a dam constructed in or across navigable waters without legislative permission prior to the tenth day of July, 1915, shall file with the commission a written application therefor setting forth:

(1) The name of the navigable waters in or across which such dam was constructed and a specific description of the dam site.

(2) The year in which the construction of the dam was completed, and a detailed description of the dam and equipment, including the maximum height or head of water that may be maintained thereby and the kind and character of material of which the dam is constructed.

(3) The purpose for which the dam was theretofore operated and is operated at the time application hereunder is made, and the purpose for which it is proposed to operate and maintain the dam.

(4) The approximate amount of hydraulic power developed thereby.

(5) The location of the nearest city or village and of the nearest existing dam above and below the dam site.

(6) Such additional information of any nature whatsoever as may be required by the commission.

**31.08 Hearing.** Upon receipt of an application under s. 31.07 procedure shall be had substantially as required by s. 31.06, and if the commission finds that such operation and maintenance does not materially obstruct existing navigation or violate other public rights and will not endanger life, health or property, a permit is hereby granted to the applicant, provided the commission also finds that the applicant has complied with s. 31.14 (2) or (3).

**History:** 1961 c. 568.

**31.09 Proposals to accompany applications.** Each applicant for a permit to construct, operate and maintain a dam for the purpose of developing power or for the purpose of aiding in the development of power by other dams through the creation of reservoirs or otherwise, and each applicant for a permit to construct, operate and maintain a dam for any other purpose whatsoever, which is capable of developing fifty theoretical horse power or more available for fifty per cent of the time throughout the year, shall file with his application for a permit, in addition to the requirements of section 31.05 or section 31.07, as the case may be, the following proposals:

(1) That the commission prior to the time the permit is granted shall value the dam site and all flowage rights and other property necessary for the purposes set forth in the application for the permit, whether the same or any part thereof are owned by the applicant or not.

(2) That the commission shall audit all outlays for property and for the construction of the dam, buildings, and other structures and works constructed, maintained, and operated and used and useful under the permit.

(3) That the permit, if granted, shall be granted and accepted subject to the express condition that the state of Wisconsin, if it shall have the constitutional power, or any municipality, on not less than one year's notice, at any time after the expiration of thirty years after the permit becomes effective, may acquire all of the property of the grantee, used and useful under the permit, by paying therefor, the cost of reproduction in their then existing condition of all dams, works, buildings, or other structures or equipment, used and useful under the permit, as determined by the commission, and by paying in addition thereto the value of the dam site and all flowage rights and other property as determined by the commission prior to the time the permit was granted, as provided in subsection (1), plus the amounts paid out for additional flowage rights, if any, acquired after the valuation made by the commission as provided in subsection (1); and that the applicant waives all right to any further compensation.

**31.095 Water power permits, condition precedent.** (1) Except where the stream to be improved forms a boundary line between this and another state, no permit shall be granted or transferred in accordance with the provisions of this chapter until the applicant shall have filed with the commission, in addition to all other things required by law to be filed, an agreement setting forth:

(a) That, in the event any electric energy generated under said permit shall be transmitted or conveyed beyond the confines of this state to be there sold, the applicant will furnish to any resident of this state or any corporation domiciled therein electric energy at reasonable rates to be determined by the commission, provided that the commission after public hearing shall find that public convenience and necessity require such service.

(b) That the rate as determined by the commission shall in no event exceed the rate charged by applicant for similar service supplied under like conditions for the energy so transmitted outside the state.

(2) The commission is vested with power and jurisdiction to hold hearings, fix rates and to do all things necessary and convenient to carry out the purposes of subsection (1) of this section.

**31.10 Permit not to be valued.** Each and every permit is granted, and shall be conclusively deemed to be accepted, subject to the condition that no element of value whatever shall ever attach to or be allowed for such permit in and of itself in the sale or acquisition of the property used and useful under such permit or otherwise.

**31.11 Certificate of terms and forfeiture of permits.** The commission shall issue to every grantee of a permit a certificate evidencing a grant of the permit allowed by law. Every permit, and every franchise heretofore granted by the legislature, to con-

struct, maintain and operate a dam shall become null and void, unless the dam thereby authorized be completed within five years from the time when the permit or the franchise was granted; but the commission, for good cause, may extend such time for a period not exceeding two years.

**31.12 Map, profile and plans.** (1) The grantee of a permit under section 31.06, to construct, maintain and operate a dam, before commencing any work of construction authorized by the permit, shall submit to the commission a complete map and profile on the scale of not less than one inch per thousand feet showing the land that may be affected by the construction and maintenance of the dam, or by any flowage that may be caused thereby, and the outline of the flowage, and such other hydrographic and topographic data as the commission may prescribe, and shall also file complete detailed plans and specifications for the proposed dam, including all booms, piers, or other protection works.

(2) The commission shall examine the map, profile, plans and specifications; shall hear the grantee thereon and may reject the same or any part thereof, if unsatisfactory or incomplete, or may suggest and require modifications thereof. If the map, profile and plans and specifications are satisfactory and complete, or, if the same shall be modified as suggested and required, the commission shall so find and approve the same, and thereupon the grantee shall have authority to construct the proposed dam in accordance therewith, but the commission may, at any time during the construction of any dam and in the interest of the public safety, or of any public rights in navigable waters, authorize, order or require such changes in the plans and specifications and the construction of the dam as shall be necessary.

(3) If the commission, in the case of an application for a permit to construct a dam with a capacity of less than two hundred fifty hydraulic horse power at ordinary stage of water, shall find that the information and data furnished in the original or amended application is sufficient, the applicant shall not be required to furnish the additional or more detailed information or data specified in subsections (1) and (2) of this section. The commission may, however, at any time during the construction of any such dam authorize, order or require changes in the construction or the method or plan of construction thereof, as provided in subsection (2) of this section.

(4) Within ten days after the completion of any dam the grantee shall file with the commission a verified statement that the same was constructed in accordance with the plans and specifications approved by the commission; or in case no plans and specifications were required to be filed, then that the dam was constructed in accordance with the description contained in the application.

**31.13 Raising or enlarging existing dams.** (1) If the owner of any existing dam wishes to raise or enlarge the same, he may apply to the commission for permission so to do, but the permission granted under this section shall be in amendment of any existing franchise, license, or permit previously granted authorizing the construction or maintenance of such dam only to the extent of giving the right so to raise or enlarge such dam, and shall in no way enlarge, alter, abridge or nullify property rights, privileges or obligations as to such dam, or the maintenance or operation thereof theretofore acquired or incurred. In addition to the requirements of subsections (1), (6) and (7) of section 31.05, his application shall state:

- (a) The year in which his dam was completed.
- (b) If constructed by legislative permission, a statement of the act of the legislature authorizing the same.
- (c) A detailed description of the dam, including the maximum height or head of water that may be maintained thereby and the kind and character of material of which the same is constructed.
- (d) The purpose for which such dam has been and is now used and the purpose for which it is proposed to use the same.
- (e) The approximate amount of hydraulic power developed thereby.
- (f) Such additional information of any nature whatsoever as the commission may require.

(2) Upon receipt of an application under this section procedure shall be had substantially as required by s. 31.06; and if the commission finds that the dam, raised or enlarged or rebuilt, or rebuilt, enlarged and raised in accordance with the application, will not materially obstruct existing navigation or violate other public rights, and will not endanger life, health or property, and that the applicant has complied with s. 31.14 (2) or (3), permission is hereby granted to raise or enlarge or rebuild, or rebuild, enlarge and raise the same in accordance with the application.

**History:** 1961 c. 568.

**31.14 Proof of ability to maintain dams required.** (1) It is the policy of this section to preserve public rights in navigable waters, including those created by dams, and to provide a means of maintaining dams and the developments which have been made adjacent to the flowage of such dams.

(2) Except as provided in sub. (3), a permit shall not be granted under s. 31.06, 31.08 or 31.13:

(a) Unless the applicant furnishes to the commission proof of ability to operate and maintain the dam in good condition, either by the creation of a special assessment district under ss. 31.38 and 66.60, or by any other means which in the commission's judgment will give reasonable assurance that the dam will be maintained for a reasonable period of time not less than 10 years; or

(b) If a majority of the municipalities in which 51 per cent or more of the dam or flowage is or will be located files with the commission, prior to the granting of the permit, their objections to the granting of such permit in the form of resolutions duly adopted by the governing bodies of such municipalities.

(3) Subsection (2) does not apply if the applicant complies with each of the following requirements:

(a) Furnishes proof satisfactory to the commission that he owns or has an enforceable option to purchase all the land which is or will be flowed by the impoundment, together with the shore line and an immediately adjacent strip of land at least 60 feet in width, but the commission may in a particular case permit a narrower strip where the 60-foot minimum is impractical and may, in furtherance of the policy stated in sub. (1), require ownership of a wider strip.

(b) Files with the commission a writing in such form as the commission requires in which he agrees that following the initial filling of the proposed pond he will not convey the dam to another without first obtaining commission approval. The commission may require from an applicant who does not have the power of eminent domain a bond or other reasonable assurances that he will adhere to such agreement.

(c) Furnishes proof satisfactory to the commission that he has dedicated or will dedicate a parcel of land for public access to the impounded waters.

(4) No person shall assume ownership of any dam after October 21, 1961, without first complying with sub. (2) or (3). Every transfer of the ownership of a dam made without so complying is void unless a permit to abandon the dam has been granted or unless the transfer occurred by operation of law. Every person who accepts ownership by operation of law is subject to the requirements of this chapter.

(5) For the purpose of implementing the policy stated in sub. (1), the commission may by rule require all or specified classes of persons operating a dam for profit to create a fund or reserve to be used for major repairs, reconstruction or removal of the dam when necessary. Such rules shall prescribe the manner in which such fund or reserve is to be created, maintained and expended. This subsection shall not apply to a person who has the power of eminent domain.

**History:** 1961 c. 568.

**31.15 Acquisition of existing dams.** (1) Every domestic corporation lawfully engaged in the business of producing, transmitting, delivering or furnishing heat, light, water, power, or street or interurban electric railway service to or for the public may, for the purpose of developing power and generating energy for public use in and about such business, acquire any dam in or across any navigable waters of this state and all flowage and other rights and property necessary to the maintenance thereof, or any undeveloped water power or dam site upon any such waters within this state, except as provided otherwise in subsection (2).

(2) No award in any condemnation proceedings authorized by subsection (1) shall be effective, and no corporation shall purchase or otherwise acquire any such property until it shall have obtained from the commission a certificate that public convenience and necessity require the acquisition of the same, at the amount fixed by such award or agreed upon with the owner thereof.

**31.16 Certificate of convenience and necessity; notice of hearing.** (1) Any such corporation desiring to purchase or acquire any property pursuant to section 31.15 shall apply to the commission for a certificate of public convenience and necessity. Such application shall state the name of the owner or owners of the property sought to be acquired; the business in connection with which it is desired to utilize said property; the specific public purpose or purposes for which it is proposed to use the same; the compensation or price to be paid therefor, and such other information as the commission may require; and shall contain a statement to the effect that the said corporation agrees to

cancel all contracts for the sale of hydroelectric power outside this state, which shall at any time be found by the commission to interfere with adequate service and reasonable rates to the people of this state.

(2) Upon receipt of such application the commission shall fix a convenient time and place for a public hearing thereon, which time shall not be more than eight weeks from the date of filing such application. Notice of the time and place so fixed shall be given to the applicant, who shall cause the same to be published at least once each week for three successive weeks preceding such hearing in a newspaper designated by the commission, and the applicant shall also, not less than twenty days prior to said date, serve notice thereof upon the owners of such property personally, or by registered mail, if the post-office address of such owners, can by due diligence be ascertained. Proof of such publication and service of such notice shall be filed with the commission.

**31.17 Hearing and determination.** (1) At such hearing or any adjournment thereof, the commission shall consider such application and shall receive the evidence offered by the applicant and others, in person or by agent, in support thereof and in opposition thereto.

(2) If the commission shall find that the acquisition and use of such property in connection with the business of the applicant for the purpose or purposes and at the price or compensation set forth in the application would be a public convenience; that the applicant possesses the financial ability to utilize the property for such purpose or purposes, and that a public necessity requires such acquisition and use, the commission shall grant and issue a certificate that public convenience and necessity require the utilization of such property as proposed by the applicant.

(3) The provisions of section 31.15 shall not apply to the acquisition of flowage rights necessary for the improvement or development of dams or dam sites previously acquired.

**31.18 Obligations of owners of bridges and dams.** (1) The grantee of any permit, the owner of any dam constructed before permits were required by law, and the owner of any bridge at the city of Portage or at any point above that city, over the Wisconsin river, shall maintain and operate all such dams, slides, chutes, piers, booms, guide booms, weirs, tunnels, races, flumes, sluices, pits, fishways, locks, boat hoists, marine railways and all other equipment required by the commission for the protection of public rights in such waters, and for the preservation of life, health and property, in good repair and condition, and shall not wilfully, or otherwise, injure, remove or destroy the same, or any part thereof, unless the commission shall have approved such removal or destruction in writing. In the event of emergency the commission shall have power, pending investigation and hearing, to order the repair of any dam without notice and hearing.

(2) The owner of any such dam shall open such slide or chute for the passage of any craft or material lawfully navigating the stream, whenever requested so to do by the person in charge of such navigation, without charge or toll therefor. But such owner shall be under no obligation to otherwise aid passage through the slide or chute.

(3) Except when emergency shall require the same for the protection of life, health or property, no substantial alteration or addition shall be made to any dam heretofore or hereafter constructed without obtaining an order therefor from the commission, which order may be issued only after an investigation and upon a finding that the proposed alterations or additions will not impair the sufficiency of such dam or any existing public rights in such waters.

(4) The public service commission shall in the interest of public rights in navigable waters, or to promote safety and protect life, health and property, require the grantee of any permit, under this chapter, or of any permit or authorization heretofore provided for by legislative enactment, prior to flowing any lands by the construction of a dam thereunder, to remove from such lands all or any portion of the standing and fallen timber and all or any portion of the brush. Provided that in cases where the application for permit proposes construction of a dam for water reservoir or water storage purposes, and not for the purpose of operating a hydroelectric generating plant, the nature, extent and time for such removal shall be determined prior to the granting of a permit, except that subsequent to the granting of a permit the commission may make such modification in the removal requirements as may be in the public interest and which will not materially alter the economics of the project; and in making such original determination or any modification thereof the economic need for the project shall be considered.

**31.185 Permits to abandon dams.** (1) No owner of any dam shall abandon or remove or alter or transfer ownership of such dam without first obtaining a permit therefor from the commission.

(2) An application for a permit to abandon, remove, alter or transfer ownership of a dam shall be made to the commission upon forms prescribed by it and shall contain the owner's name and address, a brief description of the dam and its location, and such other information as the commission requires for the purpose of enabling it to act on the application.

(3) Upon receipt of an application for such a permit, the commission shall fix a time and place for a public hearing thereon and shall give written notice of such hearing to the conservation department and to the clerk of each municipality in which the dam and flowage are located. The commission may give such additional notice as it deems necessary and may require the applicant to give notice of the hearing substantially as provided in s. 31.06 (2) with respect to hearings on applications for construction of dams.

(4) Prior to the hearing the commission shall have its staff make its own investigation of the dam and, on the basis of such investigation, shall make recommendations as to the type of requirements, if any, which it would impose on the applicant under sub. (5) as a condition to granting the permit. Such recommendations shall be presented at the hearing. If no one registers opposition to the application at the hearing, the commission shall grant the permit, subject to such conditions as it deems necessary under sub. (5). If someone registers opposition to the abandonment at the hearing and such opposition is not withdrawn, the commission shall defer action on the application for a period of 120 days after the hearing. Within a reasonable time after the expiration of such period, the commission shall deny the permit, or grant the permit, subject to such conditions as it imposes under sub. (5), unless, within such 120-day period, one or more municipalities or other persons or associations have agreed to acquire ownership of the dam and have furnished satisfactory proof of intent to comply with s. 31.14 (2) or (3).

(5) As a prerequisite to the granting of a permit under this section, the commission may require the applicant to comply with such conditions as it deems reasonably necessary in the particular case to preserve public rights in navigable waters, to promote safety, and to protect life, health and property.

**History:** 1961 c. 568.

**31.19 Complaint of insufficiency of dam; inspection.** The public service commission shall examine at least once in each year each dam having a theoretical horse power capacity of seven hundred fifty horse power or more and which is maintained or operated in or across navigable waters, and in addition thereto and upon complaint in writing from the mayor of any city, supervisor of any town, or the president or trustee of any village, that any dam maintained or operated in or across any waters whether navigable or non-navigable, or any reservoir is in an unsafe condition, or from any person that his property or any property under his control is endangered by a dam or reservoir, the commission shall investigate or cause an investigation to be made of such complaint, or the commission may, upon its own motion, examine any dam or reservoir, and, in any case, if it shall find that any dam or reservoir is not sufficiently strong, or is unsafe, and dangerous to life or property, it shall determine what alterations, additions or repairs are necessary to be made and shall order the owner, or person having control of such dam or reservoir to cause such alterations or repairs to be made within a time to be limited by the order; and the commission may cause to be drawn off, in whole or in part, the water in said reservoir or impounded by said dam, when it shall determine that such action is necessary to prevent impending danger to persons or property.

**31.20 Inspection fee.** Every owner, excepting municipalities, of a dam heretofore or hereafter constructed in or across navigable waters shall pay to the commission annually, on or before the first day of February, for the purpose of defraying the actual expenses of the commission incurred in inspecting and supervising the construction or maintenance, or both, of such dam and equipment, an inspection fee of not to exceed ten cents per theoretical horse power capacity of such dam at an ordinary stage of water, said fee however, not to be less than twenty-five dollars in any case, if such actual expenses of the commission shall equal that amount. The amount of such fee shall be determined annually by the commission, and notice of the amount due shall be forwarded by mail to each such owner, or the agent thereof, not later than December first of each year. Inspection fees received by the commission shall be paid into the state treasury.

**31.21 Transfer of permit.** (1) No transfer or assignment of any permit granted under s. 31.06 or 31.08 shall be of any effect whatsoever unless it is in writing and a certified copy thereof within 10 days after the execution thereof, is filed with the commission and unless such transfer or assignment is approved in writing by the commission; and no such transfer or assignment shall be approved by the commission except after an investigation and a finding that the transfer or assignment is not made or intended to be



made for a purpose or to create a condition prohibited by s. 31.22 and that the transferee or assignee has complied with s. 31.14 (2) or (3). No permit shall be transferred or assigned to a foreign corporation, nor shall any permit granted to a municipality be assigned or transferred to any person, otherwise than as security for a loan made in good faith and concurrently with and as consideration for such transfer or assignment, and no foreign corporation shall have power to acquire title to any such permit, nor shall any person have power to acquire title to a permit granted to or acquired by a municipality, otherwise than in the enforcement of such security, and in no case shall any such foreign corporation hold title to or operate under any such permit for a period longer than 3 years.

(2) No municipality shall make or execute any lease or other contract with any person, firm, or corporation for the sale or use of hydraulic or hydroelectric power developed or generated by such municipality under a permit granted under section 31.06 or section 31.08 for a period longer than ten years, unless the same shall be first approved by the commission, after investigation and upon a finding that such lease or contract will not impair or interfere with the purpose or uses for which such dam was acquired or constructed by the municipality.

**History:** 1961 c. 568.

**31.22 Unlawful combinations, trusts.** If any dam maintained under a permit,

(1) Shall be owned, leased, trustee, possessed or controlled in any manner whatsoever that makes it form a part of or in any way effect an unlawful combination;

(2) Or shall be in any wise controlled by any combination in the form of an unlawful trust;

(3) Or forms the subject of any contract or conspiracy to limit the output of any hydraulic or hydroelectric power derived therefrom, or to restrain unlawfully trade in the generation, sale or distribution of hydraulic or hydroelectric power derived therefrom.

The state may take possession thereof by proceedings instituted by the commission, as in cases of receivership, and in such proceedings the members of the commission shall be appointed to act as receivers during such period as the court may determine.

**31.23 Forfeitures; private bridges and dams.** (1) Every person who constructs or maintains in navigable waters or aids in the construction or maintenance therein of any bridge or dam not authorized by law, shall forfeit for each such offense, and for each day that the free navigation of such waters are obstructed by such bridge or dam a sum not exceeding \$50.

(2) Every person or corporation violating any of the provisions of this chapter, other than those mentioned in subsection (1) of this section, or violating any order made by the commission pursuant to any provision of this chapter, shall forfeit for each such violation not more than one thousand dollars.

(3) (a) There shall be no forfeiture under the provisions of this section in any case where a bridge is built by a private citizen across any navigable waters having a width of 35 feet or more, providing such bridge does not impair the rights of the public for purposes of navigation or fishing.

(b) No such bridge shall be maintained unless its construction shall first be approved by the public service commission after public hearing and on not less than 10 days' written notice to the applicant and to the county and town clerks of the county and town wherein all or a portion of the proposed bridge is to be located.

(c) Each applicant who shall apply to the public service commission for a permit to construct any such bridge shall state in his application the proposed location of the bridge, the depth of the water to be spanned, the materials to be used in the construction of the bridge, the plans of the proposed bridge, together with such other facts as the commission may require.

(d) Every such bridge used by the public shall at all times be maintained in a safe condition by the owners of the land abutting the approaches of the bridge, and the owners shall make such repairs as are reasonably necessary therefor. The town shall not become liable for any damages resulting from the insufficiency or want of repairs of such bridge. If the public service commission upon inspection finds that such bridge is in need of repairs, it shall notify the owners responsible for the repairs thereof, and also send a copy of such notice to the town board, to make all repairs as are reasonably necessary therefor. If such repair work as ordered by the public service commission is not commenced within 60 days after receipt of such notice, the public service commission may close such bridge until it is so repaired. Whenever any owner responsible for such bridge shall fail to repair or maintain the bridge in a good and safe condition, after having been notified so to do by the public service commission for 60 days after such notification, such town

board upon its own initiative may make such required repairs on such bridge, and the cost thereof shall be paid by the owners responsible therefor, and the town clerk shall enter such amount of the cost of repairs upon the next tax roll of the town.

**31.25 Nuisances, abatement.** Every dam, bridge or other obstruction constructed or maintained in or over any navigable waters of this state in violation of this chapter, and every dam not furnished with a slide, chute or other equipment prescribed by the commission, is hereby declared to be a public nuisance, and the construction thereof may be enjoined and the maintenance thereof may be abated by action at the suit of the state or any citizen thereof.

**31.26 Civil liabilities.** (1) The owner of any dam or of any privately owned bridge across the Wisconsin river or the Black river or any of their tributaries shall be liable for all damages occasioned to property by a failure to provide such dam or bridge with slides, booms and chutes as required by subsection (1) of section 31.18. The person or party suffering any such damage shall have a lien upon the dam and all mills, machinery and appurtenances of such owner erected thereon, or served with water thereby, and on the lands adjoining, not exceeding forty acres; or, as the case may be, a lien upon such bridge and its approaches.

(2) The claimant of such lien shall file a notice thereof in writing in the office of the clerk of the circuit court of the county in which the dam or bridge is located within sixty days after sustaining such damages and shall commence an action to enforce the lien within six months after filing such notice. Such lien shall accrue upon the filing of such notice and failure to file the same or to commence such action within the times specified therefor respectively shall operate as a waiver of the lien. Judgment for the plaintiff for the recovery of damages and declaring such lien may be enforced by an execution sale of the property affected as in ordinary actions at law, and upon such sale all rights to maintain such dam or bridge shall pass to the purchaser.

(3) In case of any personal injury by reason of any such neglect or failure the damages sustained thereby may be recovered and a lien and judgment enforced in like manner; and if death results an action may be maintained by the representatives of the deceased in the manner provided in other cases of death resulting from negligence or wrong.

(4) No common law liability, and no statutory liability provided elsewhere in these statutes, for damage resulting from or growing out of the construction, maintenance or operation of any dam is released, superseded, or in any manner affected by the provisions of this chapter; and this chapter creates no liability on the part of the state for any such damages.

**31.27 Adequate service; reasonable rates.** Upon complaint by any party affected, setting forth that any grantee of a permit to develop hydraulic power and generate hydroelectric energy for sale or service to the public is not furnishing citizens of this state with adequate service at a reasonable rate in consequence of sales of such energy outside of the state, the commission shall have power to declare any or all contracts entered into by said grantee for such sales null and void in so far as they interfere with such service or rate. Such declaration shall be made only after a hearing and investigation and a recorded finding that convenience and necessity require the sale of a specified part or all such energy within this state.

**31.28 Court review of commission orders.** Orders of the commission shall be subject to review in the manner provided in chapter 227.

**31.29 May employ hydraulic engineer and assistants.** The commission is authorized to employ and fix the salaries of a competent hydraulic engineer and other assistants necessary to carry out the provisions of this chapter.

**31.30 Dams on Brule river.** It is declared to be the policy of the state to prohibit forever the building or maintaining of any dam or dams across the Brule river or any of its tributaries in Douglas county, except that a dam with an adequate fishway may be constructed across said Brule river at each of the three sites hereinafter described, or at such other site or sites as may be selected jointly by the conservation commission and the public service commission in place of either or all of the sites hereinafter mentioned, the purpose of which shall be to provide a method whereby fish declared to be undesirable for said stream by the conservation commission may be eliminated or prevented from ascending the stream, and to permit said stream to be developed for trout in different stretches thereof as may be determined by the conservation commission: site No. 1 known as Clevedon site in the southeast quarter of the northwest quarter of section 10, township 49 north, range 10 west; site No. 2 known as the Old Mill site in the northwest quarter of the southeast quarter,

section 11, township 47 north, range 10 west; and site No. 3, known as the Upper or Rock dam site in the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter of section 22, township 47 north, range 10 west; and all rights, privileges, and franchises granted prior to June 26, 1905, to any person or corporation to improve said Brule river or any of its tributaries in said county for any purpose whatever, are repealed and annulled. No domestic corporation organized subsequent to the date aforesaid shall exercise any of the powers or privileges authorized or conferred by sections 180.15 to 180.18, inclusive, [Stats. 1925] in, across or along said river or any of its tributaries in the county of Douglas.

**31.31 Dams on nonnavigable streams.** Any person may erect and maintain upon his own land, and, with the consent of the owner, upon the land of another, a water mill and a dam to raise water for working it upon and across any stream that is not navigable in fact for any purpose whatsoever upon the terms and conditions and subject to the regulations hereinafter expressed; and every municipality may exercise the same rights upon and across such streams that they may exercise upon or across streams navigable for any purpose whatsoever.

**31.32 Dams not to injure other dams or sites.** No such dam shall be erected to the injury of any mill lawfully existing, either above or below it on the same stream; nor to the injury of any mill site on the same stream on which a mill or milldam shall have been lawfully erected and used or is in the process of erection, unless the right to maintain a mill on such last-mentioned site shall have been lost or defeated by abandonment or otherwise; nor to the injury of any such mill site which has been occupied as such by the owner thereof, if such owner, within a reasonable time after commencing such occupation, completes and puts in operation a mill for the working of which the water of such stream shall be applied.

**31.33 Jurisdiction of commission.** (1) ALL HERETOFORE OR HEREAFTER CONSTRUCTED; ACTION FOR DAMAGES. All mills and milldams lawfully erected or constructed, on streams not navigable at the time, under and pursuant to the provisions of chapter No. 48 of the territorial laws of 1840, chapter 62, laws of 1857, chapter 56, R.S. 1858, chapter 146, R.S. 1878, chapter 146, R.S. 1898, chapter 146, Wisconsin Statutes of 1911, 1913 or 1915 or under and pursuant to any special, private or local act, or under any other act whatsoever, which are not now abandoned but are still in existence and use, and all dams heretofore or hereafter erected or constructed on streams not navigable in fact for any purpose whatsoever, shall be subject to and regulated and controlled by the provisions, so far as applicable, of sections 31.02, 31.03, 31.12, 31.18, 31.19, 31.20, 31.22, 31.25, 31.26 and 31.28 of the statutes, except that the provisions of said sections shall not prevent the owner of any land flooded or otherwise injured by any milldam from recovering by action at law, full compensation for all damages resulting to him in times past and that will result to him in the future in consequence of such flooding and injury; provided that no damages suffered more than 3 years before the commencement of such action shall be recovered. The amount recovered shall constitute a first lien upon the milldam and upon the mill, if any, and such lien may be enforced by execution sale of the property affected. In every such action the amount paid or secured to be paid under prior laws as damages shall be considered and proper allowance made therefor. The authority hereby granted to bring such action shall not be construed as precluding the owner from proceeding under the provisions of chapter 32. Such owner may not exercise his option to bring such action after condemnation proceedings have been commenced against his property under the provisions of said chapter 32.

(2) LICENSE. A license is hereby granted to each owner of any such milldam now in existence and use, and to each owner of any such milldam hereafter constructed, to maintain and use the same to operate mills or machinery, or for any other lawful private or public purpose, but subject, however, to the supervision of the commission acting under the sections of the statutes enumerated in subsection (1). The right created by such license shall follow the title to the milldam and a conveyance of the latter shall transfer such right to the grantee.

(3) INTERPRETATION. Whenever the sections of the statutes so enumerated are applied to mills or milldams specified in subsection (1) every reference in any of them to a "permit" or to a "grantee" of a permit shall be regarded as referring respectively to a license granted by this section and to the owner of such a mill or milldam.

(4) HEIGHT. The height to which water may be raised by any such milldam and the length or period of time for which it may be kept up each year, may be restricted and regulated by the orders of the commission.

(5) VIOLATION OF ORDERS, PENALTIES. Every person, firm or corporation violating any of the orders respecting any such mill or milldam made by the commission shall for-

feit for each such violation a sum not exceeding five hundred dollars which may be recovered by civil action as provided by chapter 288.

**31.34 Flow of water regulated.** Each person, firm or corporation maintaining a dam on any navigable stream shall pass at all times at least twenty-five per cent of the natural low flow of water of such stream, except as otherwise provided by law. This section, however, shall not apply to a plant or dam where the water is discharged directly into a lake, mill pond, storage pond or cranberry marsh, nor shall it apply to cases where in the opinion of the public service commission such minimum discharge is not necessary for the protection of fish life. Any person, firm or corporation violating any of the provisions of this section shall be subject to a fine of not less than fifty dollars nor more than \$1,000.

**31.35 Dams in areas leased by county; restrictions; control by county judge; when.** (1) Dams controlling the water elevations in areas covered by leases made under section 59.01 shall be operated in such manner as not to divert waters or withhold from any cranberry reservoir to the damage of any cranberry marsh now served or dependent upon such water supply or to any crops or works therein.

(2) The county judge of the county wherein said leased lands are located shall, upon petition and proof that any cranberry marsh or crops or works thereon are endangered or likely to be damaged by the operation of any dam or water control, make a summary order for the release, impounding or control of the waters affected by such dam or dams, to be and remain in force until dissolved by due notice and hearing.

**31.36 Water regulatory board.** (1) There is created a board to be known as the "water regulatory board."

(2) The water regulatory board shall consist of 5 members, namely a member of the staff of the college of agriculture of the University of Wisconsin to be designated by the dean of the college of agriculture, a member of the staff of the conservation commission to be designated by the conservation commission, the chief state engineer or his designated representative, a member of the staff of the public service commission to be designated by the public service commission, and a public member appointed for a 6-year term by the governor.

(3) The water regulatory board shall appoint a registered professional engineer experienced in civil engineering and hydraulic work to be the secretary and executive officer and administrative agent of the board who shall perform such services as may be required of him by the board.

(4) A member of the water regulatory board shall receive no salary for any services performed by him pursuant to this section. He shall, however, be reimbursed for traveling and other necessary expenses incurred while in the performance of his duties as a member of the board.

(5) The executive officer shall receive a salary of \$3,000 per year, together with traveling and other actual and necessary expenses incurred while in the performance of his duties.

(6) The board has the following duties:

(a) To supervise the operation, repair and maintenance of the dams and dykes constructed across drainage ditches and streams in drainage districts, in the interest of drainage control, water conservation, irrigation, conservation, pisciculture and to provide areas suitable for the nesting and breeding of aquatic wild bird life and the propagation of fur bearing animals.

(b) To supervise the construction, strengthening and maintenance of the Portage levee in such manner as in their judgment will best protect the vicinity from the overflow of the Wisconsin river.

(7) In the exercise of its powers and jurisdiction, the board shall consider the problems and needs of the several drainage districts as a unit and within the limits of its appropriation solve the problems arising in a manner which will be for the best interests of the districts as a whole.

(8) The board shall confer with the drainage commissioners in each drainage district on the formation of policies for the operation and maintenance of the dams; in districts having no commissioners, the board shall confer in like manner with the committee appointed by the county board, if any, to represent either such drainage district, or in the event that the drainage district is dissolved, to represent the interests of the county in all matters whatsoever pertaining to water conservation and control within the area which theretofore constituted such drainage district.

(9) The board shall give careful consideration to the suggestions of the drainage

commissioners or committee of the county board, but the final decision in all matters under consideration shall rest with the board.

(10) The board shall employ such persons and may purchase or rent such vehicles and machinery and purchase such materials, stationery and other equipment as is necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

(11) So far as seems practicable, the board may employ the drainage commissioners of any drainage district, or the committee of the county board, above referred to, to operate the dams in such district or area formerly comprising a drainage district, as the case may be, or to perform services in the repair and maintenance of the dams, dykes and other works.

(12) The board may elect a chairman and adopt general or special rules and regulations governing the operation, maintenance and repair of the dams, dykes and other works.

(13) The board shall meet regularly in March each year. Special meetings may be held at any time and place as may be agreed upon by the board or upon call of the chairman or any two members of the board.

(14) This section does not modify or repeal section 31.35.

(15) The right of way for such levees, if any additional are found necessary, shall be furnished by the municipalities in which they are located, and no construction work shall be begun until such rights of way are provided.

(16) Whenever levee commissioners under either general or special act are charged with the expenditure of money appropriated by the state or by any municipality for the construction, extension, improvement or repair of any levee or breakwater along the shore or bank of a river, stream or lake, s. 31.38 shall apply for the purpose of acquisition and condemnation of lands for such purposes and such commissioners have all the powers conferred by s. 31.38 for these purposes. Condemnations shall comply with the provisions of s. 66.60, so far as applicable. Commissioners may procure by condemnation lands for right of way, earth material, borrow pits, quarry, timber and brush privileges as they may, in their judgment, deem necessary for such purposes.

(17) Whenever said levee commissioners are not vested with power to buy rights of way, earth material, borrow pits, quarry, timber and brush privileges from money appropriated by the state they may receive from any person or municipality donations of land and moneys to pay for lands and privileges condemned hereunder and for the expenses of such condemnation proceedings.

**History:** 1961 c. 191.

**31.38 Municipal authority to construct and maintain dams.** (1) Every municipality may, subject to this chapter, authorize the acquisition, construction, maintenance or repair of dams across any lake or stream adjoining or within the limits of such municipality, and may locate such dam within or without such limits.

(2) Whenever it is deemed necessary to acquire, construct, maintain or repair any such dam, a plan therefor, with specifications and cost estimates, shall be prepared and presented to the governing body of the municipality for adoption. Cost estimates may include the estimated cost of maintenance for a period of years. When adopted by the governing body, the plan shall, where required, be submitted to the public service commission or proper officer of the United States for approval. No work shall be done in pursuance of such plan until it has been so approved.

(3) For the purpose of this section, a municipality may purchase or condemn lands within and, when necessary, without its limits in order to protect any property situated within such limits.

(4) The municipality shall proceed in accordance with s. 66.60 to make special assessments to property on account of benefits resulting to the property from the improvement mentioned in sub. (2) or from the acquisition and maintenance of a dam. If the excess of benefits over damages accruing to property within the assessment district is not sufficient to pay the cost of the improvement, the municipality may pay the balance, either out of its general fund or out of any special fund created for that purpose. The municipality may issue its negotiable bonds, as provided in ch. 67, to pay for such improvement. The commission upon request of a municipality shall assist in engineering, surveying and determination of charges necessary in establishing special assessment districts under this section, cost of which shall be advanced by the requesting municipality and later charged against the various parcels of the special assessment district in direct proportion to the assessed benefits of each parcel in the district.

(5) Whenever 2 or more municipalities propose to co-operate in acquiring, construct-

ing, maintaining or repairing a dam, their governing bodies shall first meet and adopt a method of proceeding and a plan of apportioning to each its share of the entire cost. Such method of proceeding and plan of apportionment shall be embodied in a resolution adopted by the governing bodies of the co-operating municipalities acting jointly and later such resolution shall be adopted by each of the governing bodies acting separately.

(6) Whenever a county or town acts under this section, the references in s. 66.60 to a city or village or clerk thereof mean the county or town or clerk thereof, as the case may be.

**History:** 1961 c. 568.