

# Northfield 2008 flooding not impacted by changes to dam

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Northfield residents who experienced flooding in their homes after heavy rains in September 2008 finally have an answer to one of their concerns.

Modifications that occurred on the Willow Road Dam before that flooding did not affect the water levels, according to Cook County Commissioner Gregg Goslin and Cook County Forest Preserve District Director of Planning and Development Allen Mellis, who were both present at the August village board meeting in Northfield.

Instead, the flooding was attributed to the amount of rain received in a short period of time and the duration of the storms, which overloaded the storm water drainage system.

“In September 2008, the area experienced historical rainfall amounts—8.54 inches in a 72-hour period,” said Mellis in a statement he read at the meeting.

After Christopher Burke Engineering ran a simulation of the flooding, consultants for the village, Gewalt Hamilton Associates, Inc., reviewed the findings.

Gewalt Hamilton determined that the modifications resulted in at most “a 0.1-foot increase in the downstream flood heights,” and “the effect of the modification ultimately becomes negligible as events of greater magnitude are considered.”

The changes to the dam were made in order to alleviate blockages from debris that had been occurring and causing shoreline erosion as well as too much water to back up north of the dam, which reduced upstream storage in the event of a flood, according to Mellis’ statement.

“We were happy to learn [that the modifications were not a factor],” said Northfield resident Jane Goldenberg, whose home on Meadowview Drive flooded into the first level. “It was quite reassuring to us on our street.”

The village is still concerned about the possibility of future floods, though.

“The area that is flooding is in a floodway—it’s a low-lying area,” said Stacy Sigman, Northfield’s village manager. “It’s going to be prone to flooding.”

In 2008, Gewalt Hamilton conducted a storm water study to identify potential projects that would help with flooding. The village will use that as well as a recent award of \$200,000 from state capital funds to help with storm water projects, to see what it can do.

“What we’re trying to do is look at ways to minimize or mitigate that flooding,” Sigman said. “But in a 100-year storm, we do expect that there will be flooding.”

—[\*Kimberly Reishus\*](#), *Triblocal.com* reporter

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