Cooperation or confrontation?

Stakes high for Fort Howard, 6 other mills

Surveying for new school in Kewaunee

High court overturns ski resort rulings

Kewaunee hospital to affiliate with Aurora Health Care

Plan will control costs better, St. Mary's official says

Another poke: 1 flu shot might not be enough

Flu reimbursementNibbles

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The reaction from Fox River mills has been mixed. The Onondaga Tribe of Indians, which together with the Menominee Indian Tribe is involved in the damage assessment as a trustee of the waterway, is supportive.

**Deadline approaching**

With Fish and Wildlife’s spring deadline for filing the damage assessment claim nearing, state officials have sought to enlist the state in the federal process, at the same time urging cooperation with paper mills.

The DNR — which has resisted the federal assessment since it got under way in 1994 — notified Fish and Wildlife in late November that it intends to take part in the process as a trustee of the waterway.

Gov. Tommy Thompson, who earlier lobbied the Department of the Interior — which oversees Fish and Wildlife — to halt the assessment, wrote Interior Sec. Bruce Babbitt late last month seeking his support for a negotiated resolution.

Thompson and DNR Secretary George Meyer have sought in the past to avert the federal assessment in favor of voluntary efforts by the Fox River Coalition, a DNR-led alliance of Fox River industries, governments and sewer districts formed in 1992.

**Environmentalists critical**

Yet environmentalists have attacked the coalition for moving too slowly, noting that four years have yielded numerous studies but no actual cleanup of the Fox.

Rebecca Leighton Katers, head of the Green Bay-based Clean Water Action Council, was skeptical of the new developments.

“This is a last-ditch effort by Tommy Thompson and his control of DNR to stop the process on behalf of the paper industry,” she said. ‘They’re doing this without our best interests in mind.”

In the meantime, the federal damage assessment will continue, with or without the voluntary offer.

David Allen, of Fish and Wildlife’s Green Bay office, said the Fox cleanup remains one of the agency’s top priorities.

“I can’t possibly get this done soon enough,” he said.