



Submitted photos

An aqua-barrier dam holds back the Fox River near downtown Waukesha during an open cut river crossing for a water main project.

Big blue balloons hold back Fox River for water main crossing

WAUKESHA — The Waukesha Water Utility is using a unique method to facilitate a necessary water main crossing in the Fox River this week — two oblong balloons are holding back the river's current and directing most of the flow into culverts near the riverbank.

It's called an open cut method, which will allow a crew to lay a 24-inch water main inside a 42-inch steel casing after cutting into the river bed while water is held back with aqua-barrier dam balloons.

The method was chosen

over drilling under the river without disrupting flow because it saved \$347,000 after a base bid and alternative bid process, said Chris Walter, technical services manager at the water utility.

Fish and other fauna are able to pass through the section of river through 4-foot and 3-foot culverts on either side, he said.

The crossing is part of a larger water main project that has been in the utility's master plan for 10 years, Walter said, which is nearing its completion.

The overall project is

expected to cost \$1.1 million, said Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak, and is a major upgrade to the city's water distribution system.

Road work associated with the project wrapped up earlier this week in the intersections of West St. Paul Avenue, West Avenue, Wisconsin Avenue and Glenwood Drive.

The pipe and casing was installed halfway across the river Friday and the entire crossing is expected to be complete by the end of next week.

— Freeman Staff