

Funds pledged to rehab lake

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 16 February 2012 15:14 -



Council approves contracts with funding entities

A deeper lake with fresh water.

Quality game fish to attract anglers and other recreationists.

Winnowing the geese population, using methods that work.

A unanimous vote by the Gothenburg City Council Feb. 7 to authorize Mayor Joyce Hudson to negotiate a contract with the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality is a step toward the rehabilitation of Lake Helen.

“I think it’s a good deal,” city administrator Bruce Clymer said Monday. “It’s a vote to keep the lake and keep it healthy.”

Clymer said a city council member voiced a concern that the 30-acre lake be kept or filled up.

“The water quality is not good,” he said. “The city is committed to trying to keep the lake and keep it healthy.”

A health alert was issued for the lake last July because of the level of toxins in the water that made it potentially unsafe for full-body recreational activities.

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From samples taken from the lake and analyzed, LakeTech, Inc. consultant Paul Brakage said high nutrients, specifically phosphorous, are causing toxic algae blooms that kill fish and can be deadly to dogs and other animals that drink it.

The NDEQ will use environmental protection agency funds of up to \$67,750 to complete a detailed project implementation plan.

Under an interlocal agreement the council approved with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the commission will contribute up to \$70,000 as cash and/or services in-kind to plan the project. The city is expected to contribute \$5,000 in non-cash services which means Clymer will work on the project.

City officials must now complete the plan, with help from Brakage who is familiar with Lake Helen and its issues.

Council members hired Brakage in December to develop and document a plan for improvement of the lake, to work with funding partners and obtain public input.

Clymer said they will look at all the issues at the lake and seek public comment.

Brakage will work with Miller & Associates Consulting Engineers of Kearney who will engineer and design the plan.

Clymer said they hope the plan will be completed by September. The funding partners will then seek more funding to implement the plan which will likely involve draining and deepening the lake.

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