

Lake Helen design gets final review

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 06 June 2013 13:36 -



Changes to Lake Helen became more real Tuesday afternoon as the city engineer walked funding partner representatives and city officials through the design.

A brisk breeze blew across the lake now drained except for puddles in deeper areas and the northern lobe.

After viewing where jetties, grass barriers to deter geese, a boat ramp and other features would be located, the group strolled to a park shelter out of the wind to better view the final design.

Those in attendance included Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality 319 coordinator Patrick Hartman, local council representatives Duane Oliver and Tim Strauser, mayor Joyce Hudson, NDEQ program specialist Mary Schroer, city administrator Bruce Clymer, LakeTech Inc. consultant Paul Brakhage, Nebraska Game & Parks biologist Brad Newcomb and Nebraska Aquatic Habitat program manager Mark Porath.

All work for organizations that will help fund the \$1.5 million project that council members had talked about for years.

The driving force behind reconstruction is to rid the lake of an overabundance of geese that officials say have polluted the water to toxic levels.

City officials started draining the lake last December.

After the council puts a stamp of approval on the design by Miller & Associates Consulting Engineers of Kearney, the project will go out for bids.

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Although a tentative timeline had the digging out of the lake scheduled for August, representatives discussed a later date because of permits needed from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Natural Resources.

A later reconstruction date could allow the lake to dry out even more, officials said, and dissuade flocks of geese from gathering once the lake is filled.

Refilling the lake, during the spring of 2014, would likely stay the same.

At the meeting, representatives also discussed leaving a few feet of water under a foot bridge that spans the lake. A smaller lobe of the lake, to the north of the bridge, will be filled in and the larger portion of the lake will be deepened.

Game fish will also be added.

Schroer, who's been involved in the rehabilitation of Carter Lake, IA, and Big Indian Reservoir near Wymore predicts a good outcome once Lake Helen is refilled, especially clear water that won't turn green.

Schroer said she's impressed that Lake Helen is so close to the community.

"I think it's a great asset for kids and for people to walk around," she said. "It's also pleasing to look at and for fishing and boating."

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