

Trust grant completes funding for Lake Helen

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Friday, 12 April 2013 15:00 -

GUARANTEED FUNDING	
Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality	\$416,431
Nebraska Game & Parks Commission	\$460,851
Nebraska Environmental Trust Foundation	\$308,301
Central Platte NRD	\$50,000
City of Gothenburg	\$284,761
Total	\$1,520,334

Ridding Lake Helen of an overabundance of geese has been a burr in the city's saddle through the years.

Getting funding to rehabilitate the lake has been much easier.

Last Thursday, city officials were notified that the Nebraska Environmental Trust board will give \$308,301 to the "Lake Helen Water Quality Project."

"It just seems that all of the funding is falling into place," said city administrator Bruce Clymer.

Every grant city officials have applied for to clean up the lake has been awarded to help finance the \$1.5 million project.

What worked in the city's favor for the Trust grant, Clymer thinks, is that the restoration project is something the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission and the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality wanted to see completed.

Trust officials ranked the Lake Helen project sixth on a list of 134 proposals throughout the state with only Omaha and The Nature Conservancy proposals ranked above the Gothenburg undertaking.

In addition, the hiring of Lake Tech Inc. Paul Brakage as a project consultant also helped win the grant, Clymer said.

"Paul has been a great resource in leading us through the process," he said about the former

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NDEQ employee.

Clymer said contracts will now be signed as city engineer Travis Mason works on the final design of the lake.

“I’m not sure everyone in the community is on board with this project but if you went over and saw the green water being pumped out, it was probably a good indication that something needed to be done,” Clymer said. “I’m also amazed at how little the amount of fish was in the lake.”

Brakage noted that typically final rankings from trust officials follow the recommendations of rankings in a preliminary process in which the Lake Helen project was also ranked sixth.

The city crew began draining the lake last December before geese started migrating and to give the lake bottom time to dry out. A pump was installed in the southwest corner of the lake to help the process along.

Last week, Clymer announced that the lake is drained.

Brakage said bid packages will go out around June 1 with construction slated to begin in August.

Tentative completion is set for March 1, 2014, after which the lake will be refilled.

Game fish will be added in August of 2014 followed by an alum treatment to seal phosphorous into the bottom.

The projects awarded funds this year by the Trust totalled \$24,247,260 from lottery proceeds.

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Of the projects funded this year, 87 were new grants and 47 are carry-over projects for natural resource work in the state.

This is the 20th year of grants from the Trust, which has provided over \$195 million dollars in lottery revenue to preserve and protect the air, water and land of Nebraska.

A complete listing of all approved 2013 grants can be found on the Nebraska Environmental Trust web site at [www.](http://www.environmentaltrust.org)

environmentaltrust.org.

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