

City sprays vegetation at Lake Helen

Written by Elizabeth BarrettWar
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War on weeds.

Any weed longer than a foot in Gothenburg is a no-no, according to city ordinance.

Because city officials want to practice what they preach, they hired Tim Root to spray too-tall weeds sprouting from the bottom of Lake Helen.

Root, a part-time barber at Stone Hearth Estates who also operates a hunting business south of Darr, contracted with the city to kill fireweeds and other unwanted vegetation.

City services director Shane Gruber said the city crew mowed some of the weeds but the tractor pulling the mower kept getting stuck in the sandy bottom.

On July 15, Root used special equipment he owns and 2, 4-D Roundup herbicide to kill most of the weeds. Gruber noted that Root contracts with the federal government to spray phragmites and other pesky plants along the Platte River.

“We needed to keep some of the vegetation at Lake Helen to keep sand from blowing,” he said.

Gruber said the cost to the city was about \$810 and that the weeds may have to be sprayed again.

On Monday, he said the small lobe of the lake is dry with a bit of water still in the main part of

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the 27-acre lake that should evaporate.

Pumps have eliminated what hasn't drained naturally out of the lake and through the tail race.

The lake was drained to make way for a \$1.5-million restoration project to make the area and its water more user friendly minus a large waterfowl population.

Gruber added that geese and ducks have left the nearly waterless lake and that city officials are waiting for permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Natural Resources District to dig the large part of Lake Helen deeper and fill in the smaller lobe with dirt.

A tentative timeline had excavation starting in August but a later date could mean more drying time which will also help dissuade flocks of geese from gathering once it's refilled, most likely in the spring of 2014.

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