

Future of Glade Run Lake demands regional support

Editorial, *Butler Eagle*, September 10, 2013

There's a civics lesson lying somewhere in the dried bed of the once-majestic Glade Run Lake in south central Butler County.

The state had good reason when it drained the 52-acre lake in July 2011. Its 56-year-old earthen dam was beyond its expected life span of 50 years and was showing signs of deterioration. The lake itself was filling up with silt and other debris.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, which manages the state property, says it will cost about \$4 million to reconstruct the dam's concrete spillway and reinforce the embankment, but the project is currently unfunded.

Glade Run is not an isolated incident; statewide, there are 54 or 55 dams in need of repair. Limited state funding for state dam repairs is appropriated according to a priority list included in the state budget. Legislators work together and with the Fish and Boat Commission to persuade the governor's office to get local projects on that list.

That's how Speedwell Forge, a drained lake in Lancaster County, already is fully funded for repair even though it was drained after Glade Run and has a heftier repair bill. Strong bipartisan political support propelled Speedwell Forge to the front of the line: \$6.4 million from Gov. Tom Corbett, a Growing Greener Grant disbursement; a \$440,000 state grant for sediment removal; and \$300,000 from the state Fish and Boat Commission.

No state money has been appropriated for repairs to Glade Run; at the same time, there are local state legislators — most notably state Rep. Daryl Metcalfe, R-12th — who have been less than enthusiastic in their support. Metcalfe, R-12th, has said the \$4 million needed to restore Glade Run Lake should be raised through private donations.

A grassroots group, the Glade Run Lake Conservancy, is attempting to raise money privately, but its president, Siggy Pehel, says the group can't and shouldn't go it alone — and the quick turnaround for Speedwell Forge demonstrates what can happen with strong legislative backing.

The conservancy thus far has recruited nearly 1,900 members and more than \$140,000 in donations and pledges.

At this juncture, conservancy membership is at least as important as money and perhaps even more important. People vote — and they persuade others to vote — according to their own values. Big numbers of motivated citizens command the respect of politicians. It's not a complicated concept.

Support for Glade Run Lake shouldn't be complicated either. The lake used to be the habitat of many wild species including osprey and bald eagles, which now nest elsewhere. It was a magnificent recreation area visited by thousands of boaters, anglers and others, who now go elsewhere. It attracted an estimated \$1.4 million a year in tourist revenue, which is now being spent elsewhere.

Let's not allow the loss to become permanent.

While Glade Run is a Butler County property, it is a regional resource that benefits a regional population. Its repair requires regional attention.

For the region's benefit, the region's elected county and state officials need to adopt a regional strategy to fix and refill Glade Run Lake.

State Sen. Randy Vulakovich, R-40th, is on record supporting state funding for restoration. The commissioners of Butler and adjoining counties should do their part as well. They need to partner with the conservancy in a united appeal to the governor and state Legislature to restore this natural jewel.

See more at: <http://www.butlereagle.com/article/20130910/EDITORIAL01/709109951/-1/editorial#sthash.pLXT02HS.dpuf>