

Conservancy must keep momentum in high gear

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A monumental task lies ahead for the Glade Run Lake Conservancy. It has raised just \$40,000 of the \$4.2 million that's expected to be needed to restore the lake.

To many observers, when the group met in April, reporting that it had 25 members and about \$500, the effort might have seemed doomed. But after a meeting Thursday evening, at which the latest money figure and the new membership number of 500 were announced, it's clear that the objective is continuing to generate energy that might in the end spell success.

Not only is the conservancy trying to tap any possible source of local funds, large or small, on behalf of reopening the lake, but the group is expanding its reach for funds, soliciting donations from large corporations in Pittsburgh and conducting research on possible sources for grants.

It's necessary for the conservancy to achieve some significant level of success in those outside pursuits for it to have any chance of restoring the lake.

The conservancy also needs to be aggressive in compiling a list of contractors willing to volunteer time and equipment — or to donate some of the materials — that will be necessary for the lake-restoration process.

Meanwhile, discussion has begun on launching the conservancy's first official membership and donation drive. Siggie Pehel, one of those at the head of the conservancy initiative, expressed the hope on Thursday that the group will grow to more than 1,000 members and raise more than \$100,000 by the end of the year. He said his goal is for the conservancy to have the necessary money in hand in five years.

In addition to soliciting money from big entities in Pittsburgh and,

presumably, elsewhere, the conservancy must contemplate ways to publicly recognize those who make large contributions. At the same time, there needs to be more things like what the Mars Rod and Gun Club plans to do. The club, in addition to donating \$500 to the lake effort on Thursday, plans to hold a charity event in the fall on behalf of the conservancy.

There are no doubt area people in positions where they could lobby their employers on behalf of the conservancy. The more money that's raised in these early stages, the more that the conservancy will be viewed as a strong entity capable of achieving its mission.

The conservancy formed last year after the state Fish and Boat Commission drained the lake because of a structurally deficient dam. The lake project could be boosted if the state had the money to contribute substantially to the project, but state officials say no money is available due to the commonwealth's own troubling fiscal issues.

"The load is a lot lighter with more hands," Pehel said on Thursday.

That's the acknowledgment on which the conservancy's current members are banking as they seek many more people to come aboard to hopefully, actively join in the fundraising.

The amount \$40,000 isn't a lot of money when the goal is \$4.2 million, but it indicates that momentum is in place for accomplishing something good and important — in this case, on behalf of this county's list of recreational resources.

What's important now is to keep that momentum building, no matter how far the conservancy must reach out for help.

— **J.R.K.**