

Glade Run Conservancy helps provide expression

Jodi Weigand *Trib Live Total Media*, Sunday, September 30, 2012, 11:17 p.m.

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The Glade Run Lake Conservancy has increased its membership five-fold since April, putting the year-old grassroots group on the path toward getting the financial and community support it needs to rebuild Glade Run Dam.

“We’re happy with where we’re at,” said conservancy president Sigmund “Siggy” Pehel of Middlesex. “On April 11, we had a big membership meeting, and prior to that we had 25 members and \$500,” Pehel said. “After that we came out with 180 members and \$3,000.”

Today the conservancy has 1,000 members and \$52,000, about \$20,000 of which is pledge money from Middlesex Township, where the lake is located. The rest is donations and membership dues.

The state Fish & Boat Commission drained the 52-acre Glade Run Lake in June 2011 because the dam was leaking. It is one of 19 “high-hazard” dams managed by the commission. The cost to rebuild it is estimated at \$4.3 million. “The Fish & Boat Commission has been very upfront about that fact that (the state doesn’t) have the money to fix all of these (dams),” said Eric Levis, a commission spokesman. “We work with legislators and communities to raise money.”

Plans for restoration are moving forward. Engineering consultant Schnabel Engineering Associates, which has an office in Pittsburgh, submitted the engineering design report for Glade Run in June. The commission is reviewing the report and updated costs will be developed after a design is agreed upon, Levis said.

Glade Run Conservancy’s other fundraising plans have been on hold while it awaits the federal government’s approval of its nonprofit status. A 501(c)(3) designation will allow it to solicit corporate donations and apply for grant funding.

Eight townships in Allegheny and Butler counties, including the Alle-Kiski Valley communities of Buffalo, Clinton, Jefferson, Indiana and Harmar, have pledged their support of the conservancy’s efforts. That’s something that Pehel hopes will raise the conservancy’s clout among state leaders.

“We need to get more support from governmental people for our cause,” he said. “With the people that are in a collaborative effort, we get our government officials engaged and pitch our cause.” For now they’re offering three-year memberships at a cost of \$5 for students, \$10 per individual and \$20 for a family.

“They’re showing that people are committed and asking them to spend a little bit of money to show that this has value to them,” said Fred Dean, vice president of the Mars Rod and Gun Club, which is holding a fundraiser for the conservancy. “These people have a genuine interest in revitalizing the lake.”

The conservancy’s efforts are modeled after successful grassroots efforts to restore Leaser Lake in Lehigh County and Opossum Lake in Cumberland County, which had also been drained due to hazardous dams. It took those groups about five years to raise the money needed. Pehel anticipates a similar timeline for Glade Run.

“I called the two presidents (there) and used their skills, by asking them to lead me through what they had to go through,” Pehel said. “We have nine board members who are extremely dedicated. ... They have put in thousands of hours, as a group, of their own time in the last year.”

The conservancy has also reached out to local sportsman’s and gun clubs for support. The Mars Rod and Gun Club, in Adams Township, plans a public “meet and shoot” fundraiser on Oct. 14.

“Most of the members are from the general vicinity and a lot of people have used the lake,” Dean said. “Me and my kids spent a lot of time on the lake on the weekends. It’s disappointing that there’s not something in the area when we had it for so long.”