

Glade Run Lake on the way back

By Paula Grubbs

Butler Eagle, October 16, 2015

MIDDLESEX TWP — The roar and clank of heavy machinery in the background would normally be an annoyance during a groundbreaking ceremony. But, on Thursday it was music to the ears of those who attended the event at Glade Run Lake. About 60 people stood under a bright autumn sun to hear several speakers praise the efforts of those whose determination prevented the permanent loss of the 52-acre lake off Overbrook Road. The lake was drained in 2011 for safety reasons because of problems with the dam. Neighbors of the lake, Dave Fowler and Bob Matchett, immediately got together to discuss the lake's closing, and decided the only way to combat the situation was to form a group of concerned citizens and look at options. The task seemed daunting at first, as the estimated cost to repair the dam was \$4.3 million. Eventually, Middlesex resident Siggy Pehel emerged as the group's leader, and the Friends of Glade Run Lake became the Glade Run Lake Conservancy. A board was formed, and nonprofit status was attained.

In addition to soliciting memberships that would slowly add to the conservancy's bankroll, Pehel and his board requested grants and donations from municipalities, businesses and others. Pehel also convinced three local state senators to join forces to pressure then-governor Tom Corbett to provide the funds in the state budget to repair the dam. The plan worked, and Corbett visited the lake in April 2014 to announce that the state budget, plus the state Fish and Boat Commission, would kick in the funds.

On Thursday, several officials praised the unrelenting efforts and tunnel vision of Pehel and his board in their work to fund the dam repairs and have "the jewel of Middlesex Township" restored for anglers and nature lovers alike. "It's amazing what can be done when people say 'We're doing this,'" said Jack Cohen, president of the county Tourism and Convention Bureau. "You didn't accept 'no,' and this is what it takes, for a community to get together." County Commissioner Bill McCarrier pondered what would have happened if the conservancy hadn't been formed and Pehel and the board had not embarked on its mission. "Well they did persevere and have the vision, even though Siggy was a pain in the butt a lot of the time," McCarrier said. "But that's what it takes."

Growing more serious, McCarrier mentioned the commerce the lake brings to the community and the recreation it provides. "Thank you for what you've done for Butler County," McCarrier said. State Sen. Don White, R-41st, used a more colorful term for Pehel's determination to have the dam funded. White said in his 15 years in the state senate, he has seen countless energetic community groups start off with a bang, and then eventually lose momentum as members tire of their task. "But your efforts are a real tribute to the county, township and conservancy," White said. "This is an amazing project." White also mentioned that state legislators hear many complaints about the state gas tax, but the funds from that tax are what allowed the fish commission to contribute \$1 million toward the dam's repair. State Sen. Randy Vulakovich, R-40th, whose constituency covered the lake property when the conservancy decided to try rallying local politicians, was the senator who brought in White and state Sen. Scott Hutchinson, R-21st, in an effort to pressure Corbett for funding. But Vulakovich eschewed the praise he received for the construction going on at the lake.

"This project would not be what we see today if it wasn't for the people of this community and surrounding communities who got behind it," Vulakovich said. "I guarantee it." He recalled telling Pehel that it could be five years before the funding became available because of the number of lakes closed around the state. "But you impressed Gov. Corbett," Vulakovich said. He echoed the sentiments of everyone present Thursday. "I am so looking forward to this lake when it's filled with water," Vulakovich said to applause and hoots of approval. "Thank you for what you've done for Butler County," McCarrier said.

State Sen. Don White, R-41st, used a more colorful term for Pehel's determination to have the dam funded. White said in his 15 years in the state senate, he has seen countless energetic community groups start off with a bang, and then eventually lose momentum as members tire of their task. "But your efforts are a real tribute to the county, township and conservancy," White said. "This is an amazing project." White also mentioned that state legislators hear many complaints about the state gas tax, but the funds from that tax are what allowed the fish commission to contribute \$1 million toward the dam's repair. State Sen. Randy Vulakovich, R-40th, whose constituency covered the lake property when the conservancy decided to try rallying local politicians, was the senator who brought in White and state Sen. Scott Hutchinson, R-21st, in an effort to pressure Corbett for funding. But

Vulakovich eschewed the praise he received for the construction going on at the lake. "This project would not be what we see today if it wasn't for the people of this community and surrounding communities who got behind it," Vulakovich said. "I guarantee it." He recalled telling Pehel that it could be five years before the funding became available because of the number of lakes closed around the state. "But you impressed Gov. Corbett," Vulakovich said. He echoed the sentiments of everyone present Thursday. "I am so looking forward to this lake when it's filled with water," Vulakovich said to applause and hoots of approval.

Bonnie Chappel, vice president of the conservancy and assistant to the Middlesex Township manager, said the township supervisors' May 2012 commitment of \$10,000 per year for three years inspired other organizations and government agencies to provide funds for the project. She said the supervisors worked with the conservancy and fish commission to help move the project forward. Chappel quoted anthropologist Margaret Meade in her closing remarks. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has," Chappel said.

Pehel asked the conservancy board members to join him on the grassy dais as he gave his remarks on the groundbreaking. He thanked everyone who helped him in his quest to have the dam repaired and the lake refilled as a bull dozer and huge dump truck worked on the dry lake behind him. "It shows that people can come together for a common cause," Pehel said. "The conservancy is the best group I've ever had the privilege of working with in my entire life."

With "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang playing on a speaker, Pehel passed ceremonial shovels out to Cohen, White, Vulakovich, McCarrier, Chappel, Hutchinson and fish commission representative Rocco Ali.

The construction timeline is now until September 2016. The lake will likely be refilled in early 2017, Pehel said, and the filling will occur in several stages.

The Butler Eagle -

<http://www.butlereagle.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20151016/NEWS01/710169901>