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Funds to be used to clean up, restore fishery in Lake Bancroft

March 12, 2014 Zach Jay - Journal Ishpeming Bereau (zjay@miningjournal.net) , The Mining Journal

Polls

ISHPEMING - The city of Ishpeming will apply for a state aquatic habitat grant that could provide up to \$1 million in funds to help clean up Lake Bancroft.

After a presentation from and discussion with engineers Brett Schwenke and Carr Baldwin of U.P. Engineers & Architects, the city council voted unanimously last week to pursue the grant funding - but not with UPEA.

UPEA estimated that its costs to prepare and submit the application were not to exceed \$1,200, which city council members said was too expensive.

Article Photos



Shown is Lake Bancroft in Ishpeming. The Ishpeming City..





Instead, the city will enlist the services of Carl Lindquist, executive director of the nonprofit Superior Watershed Partnership, who has offered to prepare the grant on behalf of the city at no charge.

"I don't want anybody to think that I don't want Lake Bancroft cleaned up, because I do, but ... we've got a full-time job with pipes, we've got a full-time job with pavement that isn't there, and I want to see the lake cleaned up, but really and truly I can't with a clear conscience say that it's worth \$1,200 to have the grant written," Mayor Mike Tall said.

He added that the city pays City Manager Mark Slown \$100 to write a \$100,000 grant, and \$200 for a grant more than \$100,000.

Councilwoman Claudia Demarest agreed with Tall.

"We just terminated (the city clerk) position to save money - I don't think we should be spending \$1,200 on a grant if there is somebody out there willing to do it for nothing," she said.

The grant would be through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Aquatic Habitat Grant Program, which began in October and has a total of \$1 million available this year. According to the DNR website, its purpose, is to improve fish and other aquatic organism populations by protecting and rehabilitating degraded aquatic habitat.

The grant has a 10 percent match, but Schwenke said the city can provide that in cash, equipment or labor-hours. He said the city has about \$30,000 in assets that could be applied toward a match.

The grant would be used to help restore Lake Bancroft to its former status, about 100 years ago, as a pike and trout fishery by allowing the city to use a polymer technology developed by Baldwin - who is also on the city's Lake Bancroft Committee - to remove suspended sediment from the water.

"The way I look at this program, the first year is to treat the lake with the polymer to capture the sediment - the suspended solids - and get it down to the bottom of the lake," Schwenke said. "The following year would be actually attempting to remove all that sediment from the bottom of the lake."

Schwenke said it's a challenge to remove the sediment, which is mostly broken-down plant matter, because most of what needs to be filtered is water - only 2 percent to 3 percent is the actual solid matter. The polymer would allow the sediment to collect and settle at the bottom of the lake, after which it would be dredged hydraulically, placed in geotextile bags and let sit for a year or two.

The city already has a permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to treat the lake, and has previously installed fountains to help aerate the water, but Schwenke said that getting the grant would expedite the rehabilitation process.

"This grant program ... would only improve your ability to get Lake Bancroft cleaned up, and probably a lot quicker," he said.

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