Ishpeming to pursue DNR acquitive grant

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

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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 Baragaon.

Shawn Simone, executive director of Ishpeming's Upper Peninsula Ishpeming Partnership, which has offered to prepare the grant on behalf of the city, says he’s hopeful.

"I don’t want anybody to think that I don’t want Lake Baragaon cleaned up, because I do, but... I can tell you that right now, we’ve got a full-time job with government that isn’t here, and we want to see this project happen, but with funding, it’s not going to happen," he said.

"I have full confidence that it’s worth $1,000,000 to have the water cleaned up," he said.

He added that the city pays City Manager Mark Jones $300 to write a $100,00 grant, and $123 for a more than $100,000 grant.

Councilwoman Crystal Damon gave a $1,000 to the project.

"We just terminated (the city’s) contract to save money — I don’t think we should be spending $2,000 on a grant if there is somewhere else 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 $6 million available this year, according to the DNR website, and is open to any community or other organization with a commitment to protecting and rehabilitating degraded aquatic habitat. The grant has a 20 percent match, but Simone said the city can provide that in such a project or in another form.

He said the city has about $2,000 in assets that could be awarded toward a grant.

The grant would be used to help restore Lake Baragaon to its former glory, with the city using a polymer technology developed by Robinson, who is also on the city’s Lake Restoration Committee, to remove suspended sediment from the water.

"We saw a big improvement, the first year we met the lake with the polymer to capture the sediment — it suspended sediments — and put it down at the bottom of the lake," Simone said. "The following year we would actually attempting to remove all that sediment from the water."

"It’s a challenge to remove the sediment, which is mostly broken-down plant matter, because of what needs to be filtered out of the water — only 1 percent is permitted to be in the actual water matter. The polymer would allow the sediment to collect and settle at the bottom of the lake, after which it would be dredged periodically, placed in a terminal bay and allowed for a year or more to dry."

This city also has a permit from the Department of Environmental Quality for that lake, and has previously installed facilities to help achieve the water. But, Simone said that the grants would expedite the rehabilitation process.

"This grant program would not only impress upon the city to get Lake Baragaon cleaned up, and probably cost less," he said.