

Money flowing in for Rainbow Lake

Money flowing in for Rainbow Lake By: Mike Leiby | 0 comments

LAKESIDE - Efforts at raising \$30,000 to contract with the lake management company Aquatechnex get rid of the non-native European Milfoil infestation in Rainbow Lake have brought in about \$21,300 so far.

The group will be using an EPA-approved herbicide called Sonar AS as a short-term solution, and would like to start application yet this fall, so raising the money is important.

At a Town Hall meeting last Friday at the Lakeside Fire Station, they got word out about the need for more tax deductible contributions so the Rainbow Lake Coalition can get started removing the aquatic weeds.

Milfoil has been a detriment to the lake itself, and fishing on it, for a number of summers.

The first to pitch in for the treatment was The Shores Homeowners Association with half of the \$30,000 sought, but that still leaves \$15,000 to get the job done. Since then ongoing efforts have brought in the additional \$6,300 announced at the meeting.

According to stakeholders at the meeting the long-term solution would be to drain and dredge the lake of nutrient-laden sediment that has accumulated at the bottom of the lake for the last 50 years, but that would cost \$1.5-\$2 million and is therefore impractical at this time.

According to Coalition member Al Crawford 58 attendees were at the Town Hall Friday, including Arizona LD5 Sen. Sylvia Allen (who was unable to stay for the entire meeting).

Leigh Ann Jones, who along with her husband owns Rainbow Inn Resort, said the presence of the weeds over the course of numerous summers has not only had noticeable negative impacts for the resort and other local businesses, but the entire Mogollon Rim.

She said not moving forward quickly to eradicate the problem would continue to have the same negative effects.

Coalition member Al Crawford said he is confident they will be able to get the rest of the needed funding.

Part of the problem is that there is no single entity officially in charge of managing the lake, meaning there is no one to get the job done except stakeholders (residents and businesses surrounding the lake) or others volunteering their assistance in one way or another.

Some suggested that a state agency like Game and Fish might be better suited to take over management of the lake. While Sen. Allen made no comment on that, Crawford said Allen seemed to nod her head, either in approval or acknowledgement.

As for getting the European Milfoil out of the lake, Terry McNabb with Aquatechnex summarized how they go about doing that. He said effective use of Sonar AS requires weed exposure of an herbicide concentration of 5-10ppb for 4-6 weeks with sampling to be performed within 10 days to determine how the concentration has been reduced and how much more herbicide must be added in a second treatment to get back up to desired levels of Sonar AS.

McNabb said there is "no risk nor harm to humans or to fish" from exposure to the herbicide at the low levels which would be used in the lake.

In answer to audience questions, McNabb assured the group that they have had extremely high success in weed eradication, up to a 99 percent success rate.

He added that once completed the first year of treatment would provide the lake with up to 4-6 years of freedom from the targeted weeds, though spot treatments will be required from the second year on.

Finally, Joe Hills described the funding situation saying the coalition needed to raise at least \$15,000 to match the \$15,000 being committed by the Shores HOA adding that if 100 stakeholders were to contribute just \$150 each, that goal would be reached.

Crawford said that in response to Hills call for action several attendees "promptly tendered their personal check to the cause."

Pinetop-Lakeside Councilwoman Leslee Wessel along with Kathy Dahnk from the Pinetop-Lakeside Chamber of Commerce said the Lake was recognized as indeed being highly important to the entire community even though it is not within Town boundaries.

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