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## Moody Lake next on W.D. projects list

by DENISE MARTIN

In the world of water quality, the term legacy doesn't always mean something positive. In the case of a public park on Moody Lake in Chisago Lake Township South, research has identified a "legacy" load of contaminating manure built up over decades of an operating dairy farm. Last week the watershed district managers voted to do something about it.

The historic site on the shore of Moody Lake features a rare, round barn and an outbuilding available for gatherings, with a parking lot accessed from Lofton Avenue.

The Watershed District (WD) Board held a public hearing March 9 to present a four-part plan to address improving Moody Lake water quality and approved the plan.

This project involves removing years and years of manure in the soil on the lake side of the barn, to the depth of about two feet. The disposal is being facilitated by the donation of acreage close-by, west of Lofton, owned by a WD Manager, Doug Toavs.

Toavs abstained from the vote directly impacting his land; although other managers pointed out he is getting nothing of value from this and is in fact, saving the district hundreds in hauling/spreading costs.

In addition to excavating the manure nutrient; ditches or swales within the immediate lake drainage area will be improved and planted with natives. A sandy walking path near the barn will be stabilized. Two small rain gardens will be installed near the parking lot.

There also will be dredging of about three-tenths of an acre to improve function of a wetland area —to be done in the frozen months of next winter.

Project manager, engineer Kyle Crawford said the district has through 2024 to use grant funds. The projects will max-out between \$237,000 to \$276,000, depending on bidding.

Private landowners involved in providing easements, etc. continue to be contacted.

The managers were told the township, which owns the Moody Round Barn Park, has approved the work.

Crawford said the timeline calls first for action approving the district's engineering firm EOR to do final plans, then advertising and potentially awarding a bid by August, with some of the work starting in fall 2023. The vote was unanimous.

Moody Lake is at the front end of the watershed's flow, that eventually feeds Forest Lake and Comfort Lake. The cleaner the water sources at the outer edges of the watershed, the less the big basins become depositories for incoming pollutants.

The watershed district is a special taxation area established to improve water quality, assist in regulating development by issuing permits, and restoring natural hydrology where feasible.

~ Managers also gave the okay to proceed on a long range plan to use a former gravel pit to the west and south of Little Comfort Lake for flooding control. EOR is working on the project and there is a willing property owner.

~ Tax forfeit parcels near North Shore Trail North have been brought to the attention of the City of Forest Lake and the WD. Managers approved responding to the notice of the wetland area's availability with a "declaration of interest" in acquiring the lots for conservation and preservation.

~ The Comfort Lake Association requested a reimbursement for a whole-lake floridone treatment in the amount of \$15,000. The association contributed \$11,000 and the DNR reportedly cost-shared \$25,000.

The WD has funding from the state for "innovative" treatments under a research program and the reimbursement was approved, with Manager Chris Loth abstaining. Chair Steve Schmaltz was opposed. He expressed concern for the application process having "dragged on."

And, there was discussion about a new approach to ever-increasing shoreline development and the negative impacts from intense lakeshore uses.



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Staff member Aidan Read explained that the next 10 years will see more outreach to create practical financial assistance and better options. The WD can treat this as a pilot program in 2023 once it gets put together, he added.

The district has offered a few hundred dollar "plant grants" for helping residents in the watershed district to install native plantings and replace manicured turf and sterile lakeshore. The few who did participate have found the ideal program should have broader qualifying conditions, support projects of greater scope and that follow-up and maintenance of planting sites was more involved than anticipated. District staff also recommend a staggered level of financial aid for three years, post installation.

Those involved have been brainstorming a new approach and the feedback given at last week's meeting will go into developing a public education aspect and finalizing the program's application process. The district also needs to evaluate 2023 budgeted amounts and see what it can dedicate to a program for this summer.



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