
New Face For Big Indian Lake Recreation Area

The Big Indian Lake Advisory Committee has been busy since their inception last winter. The local advisory committee determines the selection of cost share practices, direction of work and associated issues in the grant funded upgrade of the Big Indian Lake. Big Indian was built as a flood control structure on Big Indian Creek officially known as 11A. Federal mandates on watershed projects require that one structure in each watershed be developed for recreational use. The Lower Big Blue NRD selected 11A as the site and Big Indian Recreation Area was born.

In recent years Big Indian has been labeled as an impaired water body because of sediment loading and high phosphorus levels in the lake water. These impairments directly affect fish species and water clarity. Grant dollars from Federal 319 funds, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska Game and Parks, Lower Big Blue NRD, Gage County Government, land owner contribution and several other sources have been awarded to a community based effort at lake restoration.

The local steering committee is lead by Rick Jurgens and includes Dennis Kostal, Steven Kostal, Harry McDaniel, Roger Pollman, Ernest McKeever, Eugene Humphrey, Ron Hohensee, Mark Meints, Bill Lillie, John McKeever, Arlin Koch, Loren Trauernicht Darrell Rains, and Oran Obering. Technical advisory support is supplied by UNL-Extension, Gage NRCS, Lower Big Blue NRD, Nebraska Department of Environment Quality Nebraska Game and Parks, and the Tallgrass Prairie Project.

Following public meetings in Odell the committee has worked through the approval of project mission statement, lake improvement plans, selection of target goals, selection of cost-share offerings, select of an engineering firm for design, worked out timing for the improvements, approved the first set of cost-share sign-ups and numerous other details.

As most of you know the lake was drained during the summer and is set for construction to begin on the lake and the cost-share options as soon as final funding is received which should be this month. The plan is that during the winter lake construction work will be completed and will be ready for refill with the summer rains. As with all construction efforts Mother Nature can speed up or slow down the effort.

Big Indian Lake itself will see the installation of three sediment dikes on the southwest, south and northeast drainage entrances. The tops of these dikes will be wide enough for a walking trail to be developed all the way around the lake, which will be a nice added feature to the recreation area. A new boat ramp and ADA access to dock and restroom will be added on the southeast area. Five or six jetties will protect fishing coves and two for the swimming area a bit southwest of it's prior location will be added features. Numerous fish shoals and fish habitat trenches are in the plan. The committee has also secured funding for a helicopter landing pad for emergency use for the recreation area and parts of South Gage County. A map of the lake improvements is available on the Extension website listed below by selecting natural resources.

Paul C Hay, Extension Educator

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Gage County • 1115 West Scott Street, Beatrice NE 68310

(402) 223-1384 • FAX: (402) 223-1370 • email: phay1@unl.edu

