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GUITAR GLORY: Music enthusiasts touched by donations PAGE 8A

Post session: Lake augmentation not dead in the water

Funding in Legacy Bill keeps several White Bear projects alive

BY DEBRA NEUTKENS
 EDITOR

ST. PAUL — White Bear Lake's water level woes were not completely ignored this legislative session.

The millions requested in a bonding bill did not pass, but one proposal did get Legacy funds, avoiding a shutdown when it came to the lake.

Money was appropriated through the Clean Water Fund for three augmentation design-build proposals, an amendment introduced on the floor by Rep. Matt Dean.

What it means is next year the Department of Natural

Resources commissioner will receive \$150,000 to obtain design-build proposals from three qualified entities.

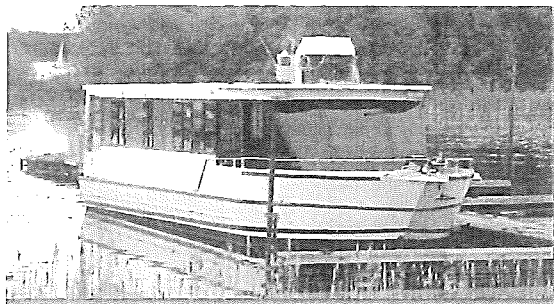
The proposals must address increasing the water level in White Bear Lake by piping water from Vadnais Lake. The design work must ensure that the water in both lakes remains as clean and clear as before augmentation. The design work must ensure the project does not allow the spread of any invasive species or increase phosphorus levels.

The language also included a statement that no detailed design or construction for augmentation may be undertaken

by the DNR until the commissioner, the city of Vadnais Heights, the White Bear Lake Conservation District, Met Council and any other communities, agencies or entities involved in the White Bear Lake project enter an agreement as to how the project will proceed.

There were other caveats as well: The city of Vadnais Heights will not lose its ability to develop lands near Vadnais Lake, the city will be consulted regarding all aspects of the siting of any water filtration or treatment facility; and the city

SEE AUGMENTATION, PAGE 9A



PAUL DOLIS / PRESS PUBLICATIONS

Admiral is now docked in front of Admiral D's restaurant and marina. Its shallow draft permits the boat access to Commercial Bay, one of the best spots on White Bear Lake. Water level is currently about 922 feet; about 3 feet from its low point three years ago.

AUGMENTATION: Friends push on

FROM PAGE 1A

will not be required to contribute financially to the project.

A spokesman for the augmentation advocacy group Friends of White Bear Lake (FOWBL) said it wasn't quite the fix their efforts sought, but the Legacy money was at least something.

"Sometimes these things take multiple sessions," noted Mahtomedi resident and FOWBL Chairman Harry Melander.

"This funding for a design-build keeps us moving in the right direction."

Next year won't be a bonding year, but Melander said Friends hopes to keep those concerned engaged. "We're getting more interest from people on and off the lake," he noted. "We're not giving up."

Melander also hopes to retain James Clark, the lobbyist hired by FOWBL to be their "eyes and ears" at the Capitol.

Fundraising by Friends will continue this summer to raise money for the augmentation effort. When asked how much the nonprofit group has raised thus far, Melander said it was enough enough to hire a lobbyist for one session and to pay expenses for the three or four events they've held.

One of those events was May 18 at the

White Bear Yacht Club, just prior to the end of session.

Rep. Dean attended the meeting and said the three independent contractor bids would "give us the number we need to go before the Legislature next year."

Of the 550 property owners around the lake, about 150 have contributed to the Friends' effort. It was also noted that another 50 outside the lake have provided financial assistance.

After the session was over, Clark indicated that the bonding bill came close.

"It really came down to the last three minutes of the session. Frankly, it turned out we were fortunate that all our eggs were not in the bonding bill basket," he said.

Sen. Chuck Wiger expressed disappointment in the way the session ended.

In a statement released May 26, Wiger pointed out that all the White Bear Lake projects in the Senate bonding proposal, including \$1.78 million for a study of water levels, funding for projects at Century College and a request for a White Bear Lake Community Achievement Center, were removed from the House bill in the final hours and minutes of the session.

"I am urging Gov. Dayton to call a special session and let us pass a com-



SUBMITTED

Pictured from left at the Friends of White Bear Lake presentation May 18 at the White Bear Yacht Club: Tom Snell, White Bear Area Chamber; Kathy Madore; Jim Markoe, founder of Friends of White Bear Lake; and Dr. James Hoffman.

prehensive bonding bill that addresses critical infrastructure needs in communities across the state. The projects in our corner of the east metro, as well as dozens of other projects across the state, are too important to delay another year before receiving funding," Wiger said.

While neither bonding nor transportation were resolved, the senator says there were also significant wins for the district, including \$626,000 over the next three years for expansion of the Race 2 Reduce program. That funding was included in the education section of this year's budget bill.

Race 2 Reduce is a water conservation

program that partners with schools in White Bear Lake and Mahtomedi that helps engage students and teachers to reduce their water usage.

Wiger was also proud of the \$150,000 appropriation from the Legacy omnibus bill to create a design-build for White Bear Lake augmentation.

"This money will help the region move forward with its planning as it seeks answers to the lake's water levels issue. The Legacy omnibus bill, as well as the budget bill, enjoyed bipartisan support this session," he said.

At press time, the Legacy bill had not yet been signed by the governor.