

## WISECARVER RESERVOIR WORK BEGINS

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WAYNESBURG — Wisecarver Reservoir in Franklin Township, partially drained more than five years ago, is expected to be restored sometime this fall.

Wisecarver Reservoir



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Work began several weeks ago by Charles J. Merlo Inc. to repair the 80-year-old earthen dam that forms the 18-acre reservoir off Route 18 just west of Waynesburg.

The reservoir had been partially drained in December 2005 after problems were discovered on the downstream face of the dam. It was drained completely in March 2010.

Southwestern Pennsylvania Water Authority, which owns the property, awarded a \$2,215,000 contract to Merlo in March to repair the dam.

"We're not looking for the work to be completed until late summer; the dam will be re-filled this fall," authority manager Joe Simatic said Tuesday.

### **Meanwhile, plans are continuing to turn the 380-acre reservoir property into a public park.**

The authority had partially drained the reservoir after stone gabions placed on the downstream slope of the dam began to move. The gabions, or stone-filled wire baskets, had been placed on the dam to prevent the earth from being washed away if water overflowed the dam.

Studies determined the dam remains structurally sound and suggested the gabions moved after water backed up in the creek below it and saturated the soil beneath the wire baskets.

The repairs will involve removing the gabions and applying roller-compacted concrete to the dam's downstream slope to protect it in the event of an overflow.

The project is being funded with a \$2.4 million H2O grant and \$125,000 from Alpha Natural Resources, which uses the reservoir as a back-up water supply.

Though the authority no longer uses the reservoir, plans were developed by a committee formed by the authority and local and state elected officials to repair the dam and use the property as a recreation site to compensate for the loss of Duke Lake at Ryerson Station State Park.

An engineering firm, Olsen and Associates LLC, with the assistance of a local committee earlier prepared plans for the park.

The plans show the park being developed primarily at the southern end of the reservoir property where land is level and easily access from Route 18.

The park will include three ball fields, children's play area, camping areas, recreation area, boat launch and pavilions. The southern end also will have an educational center, concessions, restrooms, picnic areas, trail head and parking.

A walking trail will encircle the reservoir and two cross country tracks would run through the park. Several overlooks also would be built around the reservoir and an environmental learning center developed at the northern end of the reservoir.

Jeff Pierce of Olsen and Associates said Tuesday that the authority recently was awarded a \$100,000 grant from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to begin work on the park.

The park will be completed in several phases. The DCNR grant will be used to prepare the main entrance, develop part of the parking area and construct a concrete boat launch, Pierce said.

The authority will apply for another grant next year to develop the three ball fields and possibly a soccer field, install concrete sidewalks, a concession area and other amenities such as a tot lot, he said.

Other work will be completed in subsequent years based on the availability of grant money. To maintain and operate the park, the water authority also is creating a separate recreation authority.