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Winter Park goes to work to save lakes

Commission will spend \$500,000 on studies, equipment, employees

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OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — The city is spending \$500,000 of the Save Our Lakes fund to help slow the deterioration of Winter Park's lakes.

Commissioners voted Tuesday to spend the money on new equipment, three new employees to operate it and several more studies. The improvements were recommended in a report by Professional Engineering Consultants Inc.

The money is only a fraction of what the city must spend to make a dent in the problem, commissioners said. The Save Our Lakes fund, which comes from gas tax revenue, has \$100,315 for the remainder of the year.

Concern about contamination of city lakes and sediment build-up prompted the commission to hire consultants earlier this year to detail the extent of the problem and suggest solutions. The study cost \$18,000.

The city budget that took effect Oct. 1 includes \$19,000 to expand its street-sweeping program during the heavy leaf-fall season. The equipment to be bought under Save Our Lakes will help the program even more, city officials said.

The city will buy a leaf packer and hire one person to operate it at a cost of \$162,872. Sweepers empty into the leaf packer. The leaf packer will free the sweepers from making frequent trips to the dump site.

The second piece of machinery, a jet vactor, will be operated by a two-person crew and will be used to vacuum stormwater drains, pipes and chain-link traps that catch debris before it gets into the lakes. The cost of equipment and its crew will be \$207,738.

The commission also approved a \$60,000 engineering study to determine where stormwater retention ponds can be built around the city. The city wants to build a pond to hold the water that now flows out of a large pipe directly into the Dinky Dock public swimming area.

For years Dinky Dock, at Lake Virginia, has been closed to swimmers because of high water pollution levels near the shoreline.



Gottfried

The consultants' report said the bacteria problem in Lake Virginia was primarily due to the pipes emptying stormwater into the lake. It also said there was contamination from animal excrement.

Commissioner Peter Gottfried pressed for the study to include Dinky Dock because he said if the city is serious about reopening the beach it must try to achieve that goal now.

"It's a public access point and everyone wants some benefit from Save Our Lakes."

The commission also approved plans to build stations to measure how much water comes into the city's lakes and how much goes out. A study also will be done to determine the depth of sediment buildup in the lakes, the decomposition rate and whether dredging is the best solution to help clean the lakes.