

Community Hopes Lake Will Return

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CEDAR LAKE Calvin Sumrall drives his pickup truck among the empty playground equipment by a lake clubhouse and over a green tomato lying undisturbed in the middle of the road.

"Normally, there would be from 20 to 70 people on the beach, swimming and boating," Sumrall said. "As it is, there's weeds down there."

Welcome to Lost Cedar Lake.

That's what the 600 stockholders of the private central Oklahoma lake community have called their area since Nov. 7, homeowner Dale Phenis said.

Within 36 hours that day, the 75-acre lake around which they had built their homes and cabins disappeared, leaving an expanse of mud and about three acres of shallow water behind.

Engineers now think the lake escaped through holes made when heavy rains washed out gypsum between the layers of sandstone beneath the surface, Phenis said.

"The dam never did break," Phenis said. "All the water went under it, but not through it."

Deep green grass now grows in the fingers of the lake where motorboats toiled last summer. Houses that were worth \$125,000 now are valued at \$65,000 or less, Phenis said.

"As it is now, it's not but us old fogies that can't afford to go to town," said Sumrall, sitting in the lake office with some others.

"But we're going to get it back."

"Ain't no going to," Jess Withrow, who has lived at Cedar Lake since 1964, said, correcting Sumrall. "We are. It's positive."

By the end of this month, Phenis said, an engineer should have told Cedar Lake residents whether the method they are considering to make the dam water-tight is feasible.

A clay cap will be placed over the leaky sections of the lake bottom, Phenis said. Lake residents hope next spring's rain will then finish the repairs.

Stockholders are looking at a targeted outlay of \$600 apiece to get their lake back. But the final cost may range from \$300,000 to \$1 million, Phenis said.

To Sumrall, the repairs are worth the money.

Idled by about a 60 percent drop in business at his lakeside concession stand, he now drives his pickup across glades that formerly were underwater and talks about what used to be there.

"See those boat docks?" Sumrall asks. "They left their little boats right there to wait to see." BIOG: NAME:

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