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# Hennepin County Boosts Plan to Restore Rice Lake

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The Hennepin County Board gave a boost Monday to plans for the restoration of Rice Lake in Maple Grove.

The village of Maple Grove plans to construct a dam on Elm Creek, north of County Road 30, and fill Rice Lake to its original proportions, 425 acres (about the size of Lake Calhoun), of a recreation area.

Maple Grove officials hope the lake restoration project will attract new citizens to the community (pop-

ulation 4,594) and thus increase the property tax base.

THE COUNTY board helped the project along yesterday by giving preliminary approval to the abandonment of County Ditch 24, a legal requirement before the lake can be refilled.

The ditch was built in 1913 to drain the lake so that more land would be available for farming.

A public hearing was held before the board yesterday to convince the commissioners that the character of the area has changed from rural to urban eliminating any need for the ditch.

Art J. Lee, county highway administrator, said the ditch is no longer functioning. The bed of Rice Lake is now a marsh that cannot be farmed, said Raymond Haik, an attorney for Maple Grove.

Haik said there are about 225 acres in the center of the lake bed which are covered by three feet of water and inhabited mostly by ducks.

SEVERAL landowners around the lake bed said the land was too swampy to farm. One farmer said he had lost a horse in the bogs and another said he had lost a tractor.

But Homer Graton, who runs a vegetable farm on the east side of the lake bed, claimed that he would lose 40 or 50 acres he is now farming if the lake area is flooded again.

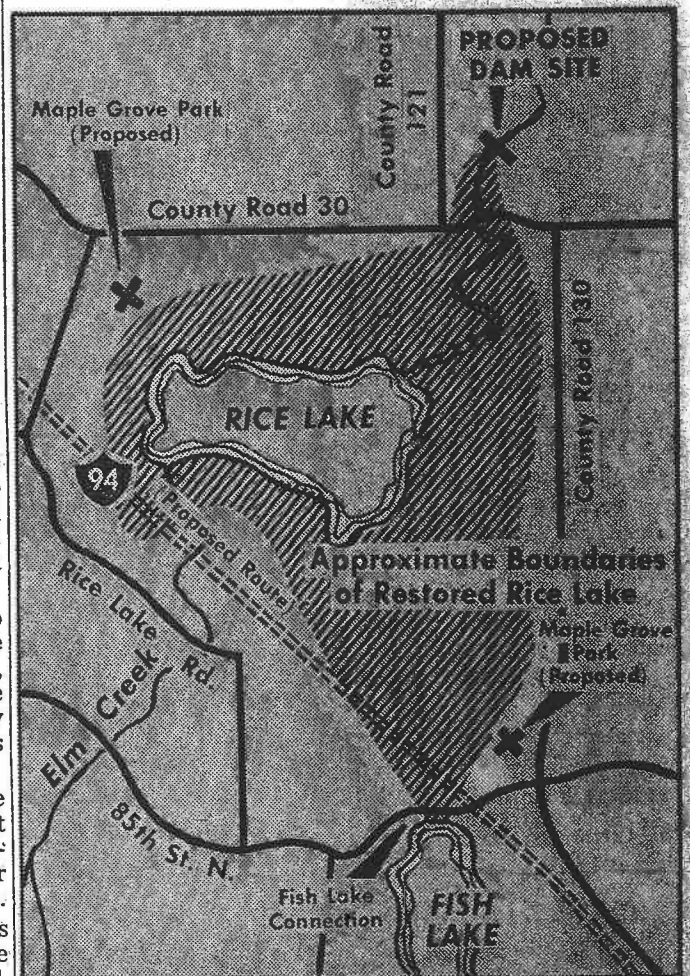
Richard H. Reimer, Maple Grove mayor, said most farmers in the area are having their land rezoned for future housing developments.

Hennepin County has pledged \$11,000 to get the Rice Lake project started. Haik said that Maple Grove hopes to get more money

from the county, the state and the federal government.

THE MINNESOTA Highway Department, which will construct Interstate Hwy. 94 near the restored lake, has agreed to elevate its route and build two bridges to allow for the restored lake. The State Highway Department also is planning a 30-acre roadside park by the restored lake, Haik said.

Maple Grove plans one park of about 40 acres and several smaller parks for greater public access to the lake, Haik said.



RICE LAKE RESTORATION PLAN  
Shading indicates boundary