

# Asbury Park Press (Neptune, NJ)

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## **Activist: health of lake is worsening**

Ed Conklin said it has been at least 20 years, probably 25, since he actually has seen a lily at Lake of the Lilies.

Conklin, 77, of Carter Avenue, said he has lived near the lake for 70 years. He remembers a time when it was a pristine body of water, when he and his friends would fish and boat in it as children.

"The lake has just deteriorated ever since," Conklin said. "The lake is drying up. The deepest part of the lake is probably a couple of feet deep."

But just as he has watched the condition of the lake deteriorate for decades, Conklin said he has been hearing successive borough councils talk about dredging Lake of the Lilies for an equally long time.

So far, Conklin said it hasn't been anything more than talk.

Conklin is a member of the group Save Lake of the Lilies, which filed a lawsuit against the borough last month to try to force it to do the dredging work. And on Tuesday night, he was one of the residents who spoke at the Borough Council meeting to criticize the lack of progress in restoring the lake.

"They made one study after another in the last 20 years and did nothing about dredging the lake," he said Wednesday.

The borough, however, maintains that it has every intention of dredging Lake of the Lilies and is also concerned about the two other lakes in town. The problem, officials have said, is that dredging is an expensive operation and it takes time to hammer out all the logistical details.

On Wednesday, Mayor Thomas S. Vogel again criticized the Save Lake of the Lilies group for filing the lawsuit, arguing it only impedes the discussion about how to address the environmental issues at the lake.

"I think it's a frivolous lawsuit that wastes resources and prohibits people from participating in a process. . . . It's hamstringed the governing body as to what we can do, or at least what we can say, publicly. I think that's a real shame," Vogel said.

But group members have said the lake has been neglected for too long. Beth Gaelick, Save Lake of the Lilies' vice president, attended Tuesday night's council meeting and presented the council with a petition signed by roughly 130 people demanding the dredge work begin.

Gaelick, 48, said she spoke at the meeting to increase pressure on the council to act.

"This has been going on for 20 years, at least," she said in an interview Wednesday. "That lake will not be a lake (if the work isn't done soon). It's barely a lake now. You cannot really call it a lake other than that happens to be its name."