

# Scores of Fish die in Lake of the Lillies

By Matt Lynch

Under a steel gray sky and a persistent mist, a steady stream of curious residents and borough officials flocked to Lake of the Lillies on Tuesday morning to catch a glimpse of the 500 to 700 dead and dying fish lining the lake's banks.

"This is horrible," said Councilwoman Monica Walsh looking down at a pile of nearly 30 dead or distressed carp in a 10-foot section of St. Louis Avenue alone. "We've got to get the DEP [Department of Environmental Protection] here."

Later in the afternoon, a conservation officer from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection arrived on scene, according to Peter Boger, DEP spokesperson. A representative from the Ocean County Health Department also came by that same day. The conservation officers could not come to an immediate conclusion as to the cause of the fish kill.

"It is too early for us to say what the cause of the fish kill is," said Mr. Boger.

Water samples were taken from the lake for testing, however results of the tests are not yet available.

The fish kill brought out a steady stream of borough officials Tuesday morning. In one 30-minute span onlookers included the chief of police, the borough administrator and two council members.

The commotion was enough to draw St. Louis Avenue resident Jim Wisniewski away from his computer and a fantasy football draft. He said

that after seeing "25 cars pull up" Mr. Wisniewski knew something was up.

A number of theories about the cause of the fish kill floated about on Monday as borough officials stopped by the small, shallow lake.

Councilman Daniel DiCorcia suggested that the rapid temperature fluctuation on Saturday evening might have played a part.

Chief Daniel DePolo wondered whether salt water infiltration played a part in the fish kill. Borough Administrator James Lacey theorized that perhaps recent heavy rains somehow played a role.

Residents by the lake commented that the water quality this year did not appear to be worse than any other year in recent memory. In fact, Mr. Wisniewski said that it actually looked better than last year. The majority of the residents standing on the shore this week brought up the need to dredge the lake.

One mother, standing near the water's edge with her two daughters, said that she could easily walk across the water without water levels ever rising above her waist.

Mr. Boger said that the DEP responded to Lake of the Lillies after being contacted by both borough officials and residents. The agency had heard from borough officials and residents that between 500 and 700 fish were either dead or visibly struggling in the lake. When the DEP's conservation officer arrived he, "noticed that they [the fish] were both dead and gulping for air at the surface," Mr. Boger said.

Several species of fish died in the lake, including carp, chad, American eel and minnows, Mr. Boger said.

"I didn't even know there were fish in the lake," Mr. Wisniewski's younger daughter said to her father.

Fish lined the lakeside, especially on the south and southwestern portions of the shore. A strong wind from the northeast blew the floating fish up against the shore.

This is not the first time that Lake of the Lillies played host to a massive fish kill. Chief DePolo mentioned that in 1992 a similar event played out following a strong nor'easter which brought saltwater infiltration into the lake.

The department of public works employees face the task of cleaning all this up before the strong sweeps over the area.