

DEP says fish kills will likely continue unless Lake of the Lilies is dredged

By Matt Lynch

Without dredging, incidents like last week's fish kill will occur again at Lake of the Lilies, according to the Ocean County Health Department.

Borough officials say they are in a bind because the high price tag of such a project — perhaps more than \$1 million — makes dredging the lake next to impossible without substantial grants.

"While we know that this [dredging] needs to be done, we also know that it is very expensive," said Borough Administrator James Lacey this week.

The governing body investigated the cost of dredging Lake Louis and Mr. Lacey said that the price tag for that borough body of water would be between \$1 million and \$2 million.

"We know that this lake [Lake of the Lilies] is going to be comparable. Right now that is really above our means," said Mr. Lacey.

The Ocean County Health Department concluded its investigation into the death of 300 to 500 fish at Lake of the Lilies last Tuesday. Water samples taken last week showed a low level of oxygen.

"This was primarily caused because the lake is so shallow," said Edward Rumen, assistant public information officer with the Ocean County Health Department.

A confluence of summer sun and phosphorus from water runoff made an ideal breeding ground for an algae bloom in Lake of the Lilies, he said. The phosphorus material most likely came from fertilizers on adjoining residential lawns. Heavy rains carried the material into the lake. As the water temperature warmed over the summer, Mr. Rumen explained, the conditions were ripe for "algae to reproduce at

The shallow lake bottom allows the water temperature to increase more rapidly, while also trapping carbon in the silt in the bottom of the lake. When the bottom is stirred up, the carbon is released, further robbing the lake of oxygen.

"For an algae bloom you need carbon on the lake bottom. You need heat, so you have the summer. You need a type of growth element, which would be the phosphorus," explained Mr. Rumen. "So there you go."

Out of all the possible measures to prevent a future fish kill Mr. Rumen said that dredging would be the most beneficial. "Dredging would help the most," he said.

The water depth at the lake is no more than waist-high all the way across. On the day of the fish kill, a number of residents standing by the lake commented on the long standing need to dredge the lake.

"If they made it deeper it would alleviate part of the problem," said Mr. Rumen, "but that's a costly situation and the town can't afford it by itself."

Ideally, he said, the borough could apply for some type of state grant, "when the financial the situation is better."

In the meantime, there are other measures that residents can take to help alleviate the likelihood of future fish kills at Lake of the Lilies — or any local lake for that matter.

Mr. Rumen said residents should refrain from fertilizing before a major thunderstorm or any other event that could wash the material off the soil.

Before fertilizing Mr. Rumen suggested that residents aerate the lawn to allow the fertilizer to seep into the soil and not just sit on the surface.

Original estimates from the

tection put the number of dead fish at between 500 and 700. However this number was lowered after a number of the floundering fish survived. Many of the fish were very distressed, Mr. Rumen said. Once the rain began it brought with it a fresh supply of oxygen to the lake.

"You could see the fish swimming normally right were the pipes entered the lake," said Mr. Rumen. "It's like an oxygen high. I don't know if fish could smile but they were probably smiling then."

As for the likelihood of another fish kill this season, Mr. Rumen does not see that taking place. "I think it is a little too late to surface this season. There is not enough solar gain for this to happen again," he said.

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