

90NICLE
TUE
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Lake Williams suits dropped by court

By JOHN PHILIP
Staff Writer

LEBANON — Two suits filed by the owners of Lake Williams for permission to remove the dam on the lake have been thrown out of Hartford Superior Court on technicalities, adding a new twist to the eight-year saga of the embattled lake.

Lawrence and Charles Gilman, who own the lake, dam

and water rights, had sued both the state Department of Environmental Protection and then-acting Commissioner John Anderson after the DEP ordered them to repair the deteriorating dam.

Originally, in 1982, after inspections were made beginning in 1978, the DEP ordered the Gilmans to either repair or destroy the dam. In 1984, they

responded with a proposal to breach the dam, but the DEP refused permission for this and instead ordered them to fix it.

State Rep. Edith Prague (D-8th District) said this morning that the two cases had been thrown out of Hartford Superior Court for procedural technicalities, giving those struggling for a resolution to the problem "another new matter to deal with."

Neither the Gilmans nor their attorney was available for comment this morning.

Prague learned of the court action during a closed meeting this morning with DEP officials and legislators involved in the affair in Hartford to discuss possible solutions.

"Every possibility is going to be looked at," and "at this point, everything is still on the table," she said.

"It's not fair to the town or the state to jump into something" without properly analyzing it, she said.

A list of 13 possible solutions to the stalemate, drafted by the DEP, was discussed at a meeting in town last week. Those at the meeting agreed that the

main stumbling block was the Gilman brothers, who did not attend the informational hearing because they were in litigation.

Since they wouldn't negotiate at the time, the possibility of seizing the property by eminent domain was discussed. As the law stands now, however, the town would not favor eminent domain proceedings because it would make residents responsible for one third of a purchase price, as yet unknown, to be set by a judge.

~~sue zone commission~~ ~~on on veterinarian~~

~~its decision to allow the home occupation earlier this spring, claiming their properties were being devalued and the noise generated by increased traffic to and from the Wakeman's residence was causing a "nuisance" to them.~~

~~The PZC approved the use because home occupations are permitted in residential zones, Commission member John Bartok said. Wakeman was granted a two-year permit al-~~

~~Ashford. She also said she sees a rate of about two an hour and that rarely more than two vehicles are in the parking lot at one time. Animals aren't boarded nor is a great amount of surgery so that animals aren't hospitalized for periods of time, she wrote.~~

~~The plaintiffs named in the complaint are Route 89 residents Nicholas Tomassetti; Toni and Edward Yeagle and Harold and Editha Spencer;~~

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CHRONICLE
WED
JULY 22 1987

Lake Williams will be completely drained

LEBANON — Lake Williams is being completely drained so its owners may fill a fire safety pond and repair the dam gate.

Art Christian of the DEP's Water Compliance unit said this morning the lake owners

Lawrence and Charles Gilman informed the DEP of their intentions earlier this month. Since they own the lake, the dam and the water rights, they have complete control over the water level, officials said.

"By tomorrow morning it's going to be all over," said Ray Kanter, who owns a campground on the lake. Kanter said he feared a largescale fish kill from the draining. It will also put an end to recreational activities on the lake.

The Gilmans told the DEP they are draining the lake to fill up the fire pond at their mill in Bozrah, and to repair the gate at the dam which has been stuck open about an inch since it was discovered broken earlier this summer.

Since the gate broke, the water level has been steadily decreasing. The Gilmans couldn't be reached this morning.

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CHRONICLE
THUR
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Little water remains in Lake Williams

By JOHN PHILIP
Staff Writer

LEBANON — The great blue herons striding along the bottom of Lake Williams should have no trouble finding three square meals today because the nearly drained lake will leave a harvest of fish for their long, sword-like beaks.

This morning some water remained, although it continued to rush into a large pipe at the bottom of the dam, which dumps into an existing stream into Brewster Pond, and ultimately into a fire protection pond near a mill in Bozrah, which is owned by Lawrence and Charles Gilman, who also

own Lake Williams and Brewster Pond.

This morning, some water remained in the center channel of the 260-acre lake — and around the dam which had become a last ditch feeding area for schools of fish, snapping turtles, water snakes and everything that calls the deep its home.

The Gilmans, who have been unable to be reached since the process began, have told the state they are draining the water because they need it for a fire protection pond for their Bozrah mill, reached through a series of little waterchannels from Lake Williams, and because they want to get to a broken dam gate at the bottom

of the lake which has been stuck open for several weeks.

Officials have indicated that the Gilmans may ignore a state order to keep the water level no more 36 inches below the spillway if they are dropping the level to repair the gate.

"They picked the worst time of year to do it," State Rep.

(Lake, Page 5)

Edith Prague (D 8th Dist.) said this morning, referring to the draining. She and state Department of Environment Protection officials have been trying for years to come up with a solution to the lake problem. The state and the town have

The draining of a lake

(Continued from Page 1)
expressed interest in purchasing the privately owned waterway and dam, but have gotten bogged down in price and legal hassles.

The lake was drained within the past few years and it took until the spring of the following year to refill.

Ray Kanter, who owns a campground on the lake, has

kept a steady watch over the process. By Wednesday his campground's beach was about 100 yards from what was left of the lake.

The lake bottom is now grass and tall weeds and gnarled stumps once havens for bass now dot what has become the lake's shores. The area smells of a stagnant swamp, and it will get worse when the fish start to

die, Kanter speculated. Boating and swimming have died, the campground business is dying, the fish will die and the herons will leave.

Last week, some larger boats got stuck on the lake because of the shallow water and they had to be dragged free and back to shore. Wednesday afternoon motor boats were hoisted onto trailers and rowboats were

pulled up on shore of the lake, which is normally a popular boating area this time of year.

Kanter said that a week ago Wednesday, he registered the boats for his campground with the state, and about a week ago Friday, the water level started declining rapidly.

"You can't do nothing with the boats anymore," he said. "They're in dry dock."

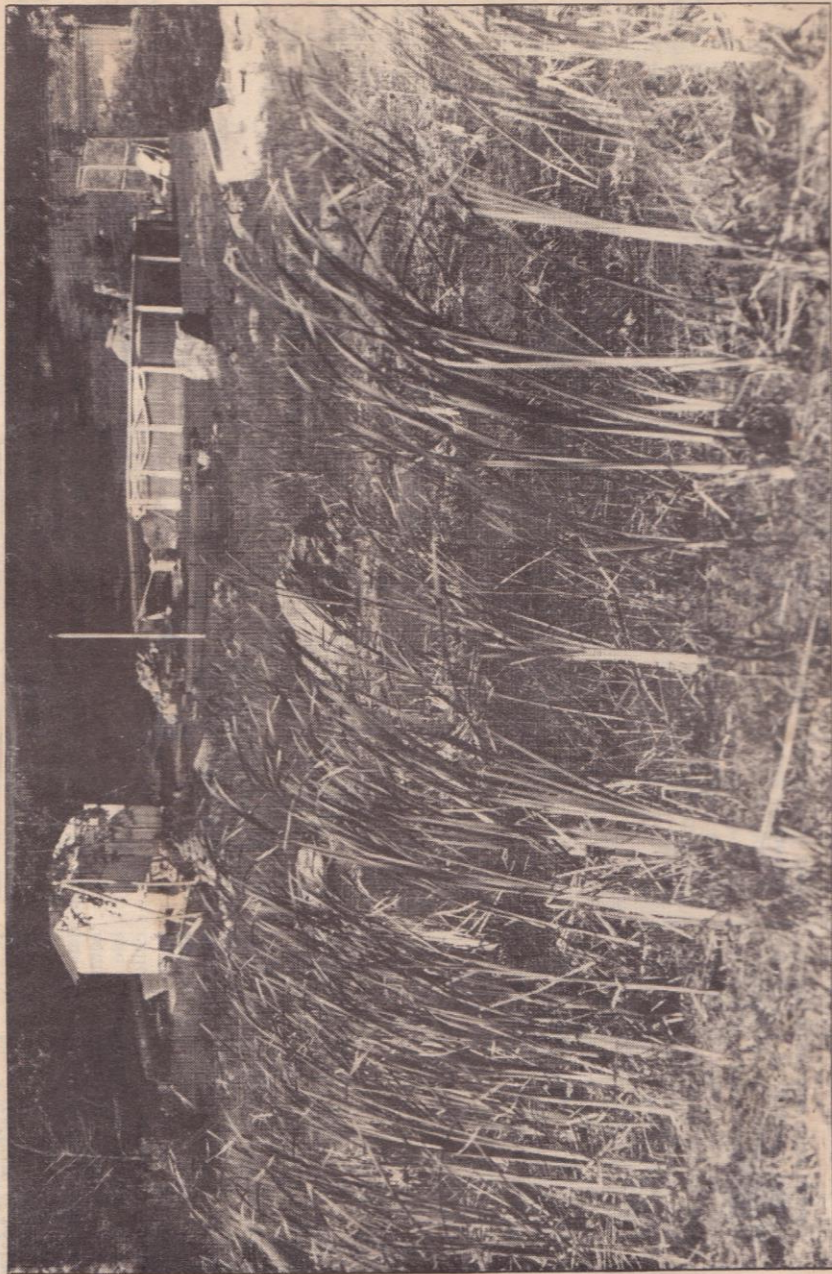


Charles Hisey

No Swimming, No Fishing, No Boating, No Nothing

WEEDS, STUMPS AND MUD is all that can be seen off shore at Lake Williams in Lebanon today. The lake is again being drained to repair the dam and to fill a fire pond.

Below, swimming pool will be only way lakeside residents can keep cool with water gone.



CHRONICLE

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Charles Hisey photos

LAKE William fisherman, above, won't have much luck anymore now that the owners of the Lebanon lake have drained the water. Owners Lawrence and Charles Gilman are seeking to divert water

to a nearby fire pond and to drain the lake so they may repair a broken dam gate

CHRONICLE

FRI

JULY 24 1987

Dead fish litter lakeshore as last of water is drained

By JOHN PHILIP
Staff Writer

LEBANON — Lake Williams was completely drained except for a small area around the dam this morning, causing the death of hundreds of fish whose bodies littered the shores and the now muddy lake floor.

The atmosphere was resigned and somber as about a half dozen people watched the last stages of the lake draining which began late last week. An odor from the dead fish — which will get worse as the days wear on — was beginning to fill the air.

"What a waste," said one person as he viewed the scene, before walking away in disgust.

Among the dead fish were bullheads, perch, pickerel, shiners and other bay fish.

Lake owners Charles and Lawrence Gilman are draining the lake to repair the dam gate which has been stuck open.

Thursday afternoon some water remained in the main channel, which attracted some people to fish by the lake's dam. Two year old pickerel were feeding voraciously on any lure thrown in before it got too hot in the afternoon and they stopped feeding.

Ed Leete, owner of the Sportsman's Right Arm, a sporting goods store near the lake, is discontinuing his fishing tackle business because he says

it will take at least 10 years, even if the dam is fixed this year, before the lake is again attractive to sport-fisherman.

He said that four years ago, before the lake was drained a first time, "I had a steady stream of customers," because Lake Williams was a well-known bass pond in the state.

After the last kill-off, the bass rebounded, but he said that the fish remaining in the lake are too small to make it worth the time for serious sports fishermen.

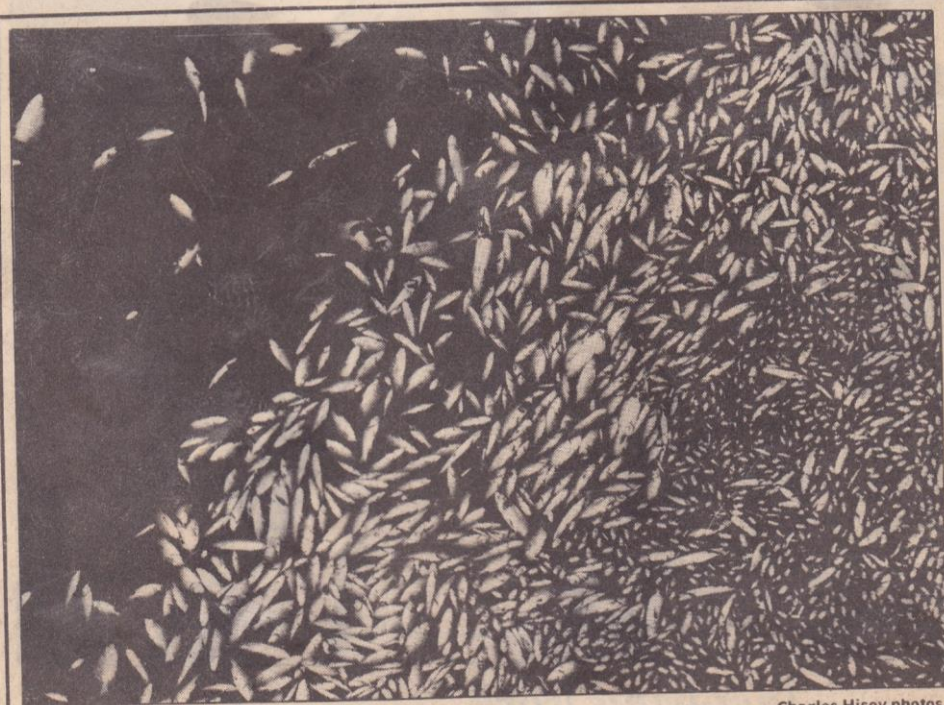
Leete says that he misses swimming more than bass fishing.

"I bought an above-ground swimming pool so I'd have a place to swim," he said.



Fish kill

DEAD fish continue to pile up near dam of Lake Williams in Lebanon, following draining of the water by dam owners Lawrence and Charles Gilman. A stench filled the air from the dead fish; late Friday afternoon all that remained alive were catfish and bullheads. Little isolated pockets of water revealed groups of fish struggling to stay alive. Dead fish lay everywhere: in all different configurations, littering the lake floor and shore.



Charles Hisey photos

CONNECTICUT

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Lebanon lake-draining angers residents

By ROGER CATLIN
Courant Staff Writer

LEBANON — A lone turtle picked his head out of the shallow muck that used to be Lake Williams. All around him, dead fish — hundreds of them — bobbed near the neck of the 19th-century stone dam, surrounded by thousands of maggots and a stench that carries for miles.

The Gilman Bros. Co., which has owned the dam since the 1920s and has been battling with the state about its repair for more than seven years, opted to drain the 247-acre lake completely over the weekend.

Lawyers for the company said it wanted to

use the water for a fire protection pond near its plastic sheet manufacturing plant farther down Bartlett Brook in Bozrah.

"The sluice gate mechanism has been broken for quite some time," said Ann McClure, an attorney with the firm Day Berry & Howard in Hartford. "Because they had to fill a dam near their plant, they decided to take the opportunity at the same time to examine the sluice gate."

The result has made 150 owners of lakefront property, owners of property near a mud pond instead. It has also left rotting carcasses of hundreds of fish lying along the gnarled stumps and darkened muck of the lake bottom.

"It stinks so bad from the dead fish," said

Freya Braun of Simsbury, who has a summer home on the lake. "They say they want fire protection for their factory, and now there's not a drop of water in our lake. What about our fire protection?"

"This has been going on since 1980," Braun said. "This is the third time [they have] killed all the fish in that lake."

"The stink is just terrible," agreed Raymond Kanter, who owns a campground on the south end of the lake not far from the dam. "But this is nothing."

Over the weekend, when the lake finally emptied and most of the fish died, the temperatures were breaking records. "They picked the worst time of the year for it, there's

no need for it," Kanter said.

Paul Kripps, who works at the Grand La Spa — which is across from the dam and bears the brunt of the stench — said he went out the lake one night last week and tried to scoop up as many fish as possible to transfer nearby ponds.

Kripps said he plans another rescue operation — this time for the turtles. "I don't know why [the company] didn't wait rather than drain it and boom: all of the fish come right up to the top. Dead."

See Residents, next page

Residents angered by draining

Continued from previous page

Kanter said he paid more than \$200 for permits for his recreational boats last Wednesday. "On Friday they pulled the plug. Do you think the state is going to refund my money back? I don't think so."

Benjamin Warner, the Department of Environmental Protection's director of water resources, said he has been inundated with calls concerning Lake Williams. "I don't know what to tell people any more," he said. "I'm beginning to make up little rhymes: 'Lake Williams, the little pond that went away; and the fish had no place to play . . .'"

Warner said that because the Gilman company owns the dam, the land under the dam and rights to the water, "they were just exercising their right to drain it. It really is their water and under certain circumstances, they have the right to drain it."

But he said it was "pretty obvious they picked an inappropriate time to put pressure on people."

Warner said he thought the Gilman company tried to build controversy by draining the lake in mid-summer, creating more pressure for the state and town to buy the dam — and the water rights — at an inflated price.

McClure said that "the Gilman brothers are hopeful someone would make the land available to the public." But she added, "We don't think the cost is inflated."

The last time Lake Williams was drained, in 1985, legislation was introduced in the General Assembly to buy the water rights, the dam and to repair the dam. The total cost would have been \$1.5 million.

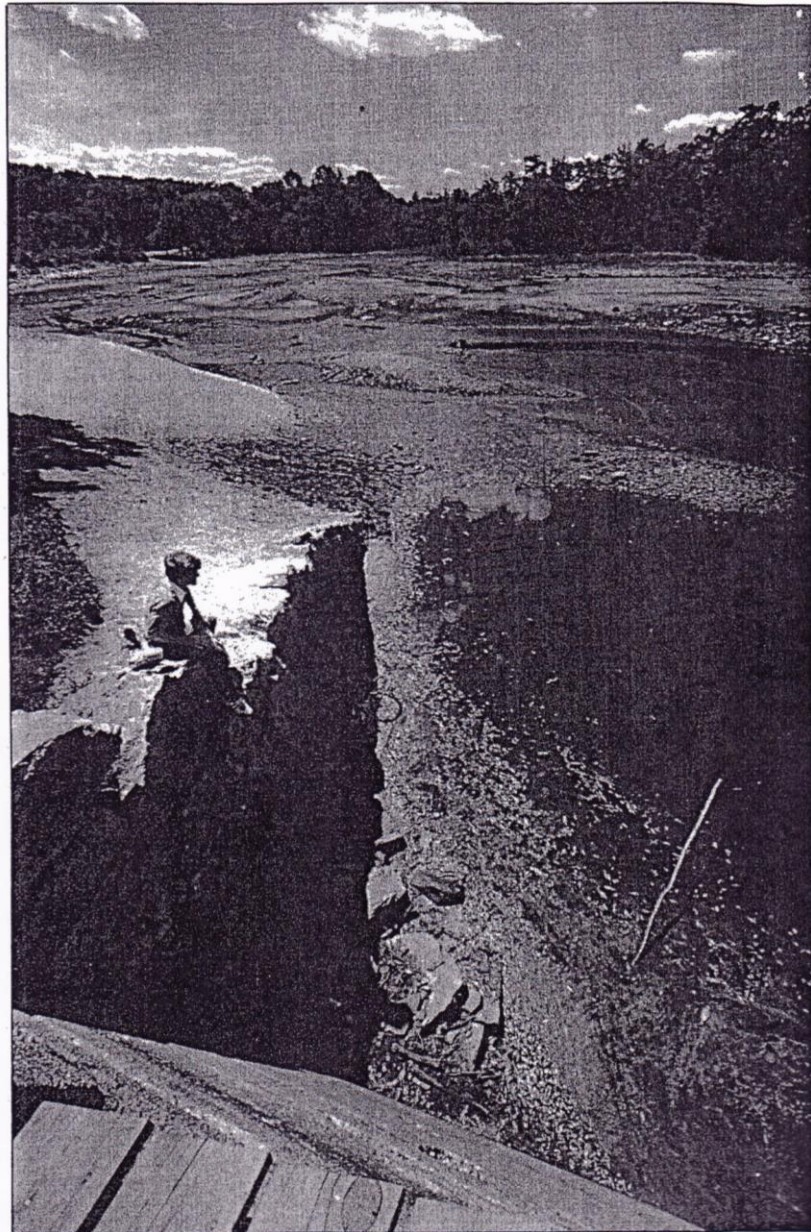
Warner blames the town of Lebanon for dropping the ball by not committing itself to buying the lake.

First Selectman Edward O. Clark said Monday the town would have to call a town meeting to vote on buying the lake rights, but without having a firm price. "That'd be suicide," he said.

He blamed the DEP for the loss of Lake Williams.

"When we need these guys, they're just not there," Clark said. "They're great on advice and not so great when it comes to action. I've been fed up with them for a long time."

"I can't believe the commissioner of the DEP would let a 275-acre wildlife refuge go . . ." Clark said. "If we were on the other side of the



Dan Haar / The Hartford Courant

Paul Kripps, a Lebanon resident, sits near the dam owner, Gilman Bros. Co., has been in a dispute with the state for seven years over upkeep of the dam.

river this would have been taken care of a long time ago."

Clark said he was told the Gilman company will spread lime on

the dead fish this morning to contain the smell.

"I don't understand why all of the interested parties can't sit

down together and get some direction on this," said a frustrated Bernyce Brennan, president of the Lake Williams Beach Association

Town, Residents Not Informed Of Plan To Drain Lake Williams

By Joe Anastasio
Staff Writer

LEBANON - Town officials were unaware that the owners of the Lake Williams dam, Charles and Lawrence Gilman, informed the Department of Environmental Protection earlier this month they planned to completely drain the lake.

The Gilmans began draining the lake Wednesday, to fill a fire pond near their mill in Bozrah, and repair the gate to the dam, which has been partially jammed open, causing a slow and steady drainage of water.

"Since the Gilmans own

the lake," said First Selectman Edward Clark, "They can drain it."

Lake Williams Beach Association president Bernice Brennan responded to the Gilman's reasoning for the drainage of the lake with skepticism.

"I can't help but question whether the action by the Gilmans was just to foster the controversy," said Brennan.

"The first concern of the beach association is the damage to the wildlife," said Brennan. "My feeling is that the repairs to the dam could have been done the last time

the lake was drained, in the spring."

Brennan added that she felt the Gilmans should provide a time schedule for repairs and that the DEP should supervise the work.

Residents, along with state and local officials, gathered at the community center July 16, and discussed several proposals to solve the decade-long problem.

Of the proposals discussed at the meeting, two of them appeared to be the most realistic to both the town and beach association.

(Continued on Page 6)

Lake Williams

(Continued from Page 1)

The first option is state ownership of the dam, including funding the repair and allowing public access, explained Brennan.

The second proposal was for the state to lease the dam, provide for the cost of repairs and allow public access.

She also added that it seemed only "natural" that public access be provided because both the state and town are involved.

One other option dis-

cussed, was that of the state acquiring the lake through eminent domain. Under this proceeding, a court judge would set the price of the lake, with the state paying two-thirds and the town one-third.

Town officials are opposed to that idea because they feel that they cannot commit the town to pay a sum of money that was not yet determined.

At the moment, town officials are awaiting word from state officials as to what the next step will be.

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July 27 1988

DEP denies role in lake fish kill

By JOHN PHILIP
Staff Writer

LEBANON — State environmental protection officials said this morning their hands are tied about what to do about the thousands of dead fish at the site of what was once Lake Williams because the lake is privately owned.

Brian Murphy, a fisheries biologist in the eastern headquarters of the state Department of Environmental Protection, said that there is nothing that the DEP can do about the situation, and that any clean-up operations would have to be undertaken by the lake's owners, Lawrence and Charles Gilman.

"It's terrible," Ray Kanter, who owns a campground on the erstwhile 260-acre lake's shore, said this morning. He said that the smell is overwhelming and hordes of maggots are crawling over the dead fish.

Meanwhile, Bernyce Brenman, chairman of the Lake Williams Beach Association, sounded resigned to the situation this morning and said

residents have scheduled a "prayer-in" next month to seek a solution.

Also, residents have decided to go as a mass to swim at the town pool since they can no longer swim in the lake. By organizing as a group, she said, residents hope to make a statement about the lack for recreation.

She said the last time this happened, it was never cleaned up and the fish just rotted there. "Nobody could understand why," officials can't do anything about the situation, she said.

The sanitarian responsible for lakes at the state Department of

Health was not available to-day, but a secretary in the office said that they have been getting "tons of calls" about Lake Williams.

The Gilmans began draining the lake about two weeks ago because the gate on the dam has been stuck open and it is

(Lake, Page 5)

In W:11:.....

Lake Williams

(Continued from Page 1)

believed that something is blocking it. They are required by the DEP to maintain the water level of the lake at no more than 36 inches below the spillway on the dam, but since the lake was drained to make repairs to the dam, the order does not apply.

The Gilmans could not be

reached for comment this morning. They have been unavailable for public comment since the lake draining began earlier this month.

Art Christian of the DEP's water resources unit said that the DEP has contacted the Gilman's law firm, Day, Berry and Howard in Hartford, in an attempt to find out the status of the dam. The DEP is trying to

determine if the Gilmans have had engineers inspect the dam yet.

Christian said that the DEP has decided against sending a representative to the lake because when it was drained about three years ago, they sent "at least six people" to the site, so "we know what they're experiencing out there."



Charles Hisey

LEBANON — DEAD fish, crawling with maggots and emitting a stench that can be picked up a quarter of a mile away, pile up at Lake Williams.

The fish began dying at the end of the week, following the draining of the lake.

Lake owners to spread lime on decaying fish at Williams

By JOHN PHILIP
Staff Writer

LEBANON — The owners of the dam and water rights of Lake Williams will soon begin dumping lime on the decomposing fish at the drained lake to restrict bacterial growth and reduce odor, a state official said this morning.

Meanwhile, officials from the state Department of Environmental Protection inspecting the site this morning reported that there are a couple of thousand dead shiners, chain pickerel, yellow perch, brown bullhead and largemouth bass in the mud patch that was once the lake, as on its banks.

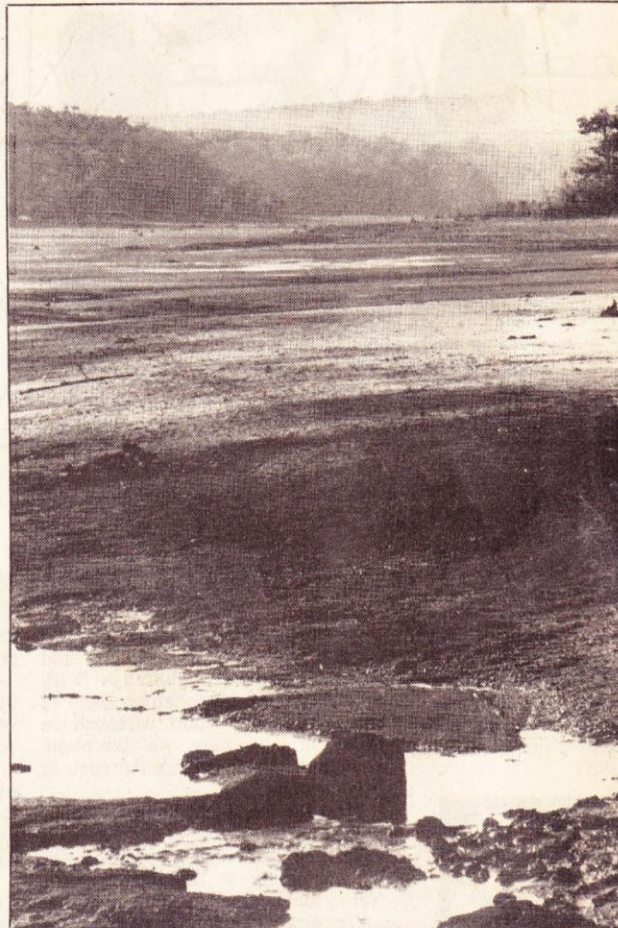
However, estimates are difficult because many dead fish are floating underwater at the foot of the dam, Brian Murphy of the DEP's Eastern Headquarters said.

Barbara Falthouse, of the General Assembly's Public Health Committee said that lake owners Lawrence and Charles Gilman had agreed to dump lime on the fish as soon as possible, hopefully today, but they have to find out where to get the lime and how to spread it. The Gilmans couldn't be reached this morning.

"They were really cooperative," she said. "They were totally willing to do whatever we thought was best."

She said that the committee had received a complaint from a resident that lives on the lake and she (Falthouse) "took it from there."

State agencies have no jurisdiction over the lake because it's private property, and rotting fish do not pose a health threat, she said, so the state could not take charge. She said she did not know exactly what should be done, so she called the DEP's fisheries division, which advised spread-



Charles Hisey

MUDDY bottom is all that's left of Lake Williams following draining operation. State officials inspected fish kill this morning.

ing lime. The Gilmans had told her they didn't know what to do either, but they readily took her advice.

The lake has been drained over the last two weeks so the Gilmans could find a way to fix the dam's gate, which has been

stuck open for at least a month.

The draining, however, has left piles of rotting fish and a stench that can be detected at least a quarter of a mile away. Residents have been complaining to several state agencies since the operation began.

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CHRONICLE

WED
JULY 29
1987

Gilmans losing interest in sale of Lake Williams, resident claims

By JOHN PHILIP
Staff Writer

LEBANON — A past member of the Board of Directors of the Lake Williams Beach Association said that the owners of the lake's dam and water rights say they have not been approached by the state to negotiate a settlement to the problems at the lake and that they are losing patience with the whole situation.

The dam's owners, Lawrence and Charles Gilman, have not been available for comment since the latest round of activity in the eight-year-old stalemate began and could not be reached this morning to verify the conversation.

The Gilmans maintain that the state has not tried to negotiate with them on any matter involving Lake Williams, said Helen Pellman this morning. At her own initiative, Mrs. Pellman was successful in reaching the Gilmans Tuesday to discuss the lake situation.

She said from the conversation with them, she learned that if the state doesn't open talks soon, they will take the lake off the market.

The state Department of

Environmental Protection recently held an informational hearing to discuss a list of 13 possible solutions to the problem, but Pellman said that the list was the state's own and did not reflect the Gilman's input.

However, State Rep. Edith Prague (D-8th district) said this morning, that state officials have attempted to get the Gilmans to sit down and discuss ownership of the lake. She said that they had been approached by Marilyn Cruz-Aponte from the Gov. William O'Neill's office. Cruz-Aponte couldn't be reached this morning.

Mrs. Pellman said every time the state asks them for information about the dam or the lake, it costs the Gilmans hundreds of dollars in experts' fees. She said that they are shrewd businessmen, and that they are sick of the hassles. She also said since they don't need the dam for their power company in Bozrah, they are questioning why they should maintain it.

Pellman said that when it became apparent that the dam needed repair, the Gilmans wanted lake-area residents to pay them for the use of the lake.

At that time, residents were

reluctant to pay for a privilege that they had previously had for free.

Now, she says, "they understand it has to be paid for. They're asking the state to pay. We all pay taxes."

"Some people say we (lake residents) should be quiet," Pellman said. But Pellman said if residents don't speak up, now, they whole thing will be quietly buried. With last week's draining, she said from the Gilman's standpoint, the issue could have been resolved.

The Gilmans have drained the lake apparently to get to the dam gate which is broken. The draining left thousands of dead fish piled on the lake floor and shores. This morning, men were on the site with bags of lime to help further the decomposition process and prevent complications from bacteria.

With the lake dry, there's no reason to repair the dam, Pellman said. "It will just be a local problem that died," she said.

"I decided that I would make my own campaign. I'm not content to wait," she said.

She would not comment about her plans, however.

CHRONICLE
THUR
JULY 30
1987

State, Gilmans meet

Progress reported toward solving lake problem

By JOHN PHILLIP
Staff Writer

LEBANON — An aide to Gov. William O'Neill met Wednesday afternoon with the owners of the dam and water rights at Lake Williams to investigate the possibility a joint meeting of all parties concerned in hopes of ending the eight-year-old stalemate at the lake.

Officials said Wednesday's session was the first time the lake owners, Lawrence and Charles Gilman, have met with representatives of the state about the lake situation.

The Gilmans met with O'Neill aide Marilyn Cruz-Aponte to open lines of communication, she said this morning. "I thought they've been basically ignored" by the state, Cruz-Aponte said.

"There's movement that I didn't feel before this office got involved," she added. Meetings with state officials, legislators and, hopefully the Gilmans, will continue, she said.

DEP Deputy Commissioner of Environmental Quality John Anderson this morning confirmed that such a meeting took place Wednesday, but added no proposals have been made and that there is no agenda for a future meeting, as yet.

"It's the first indication that people are willing to sit down," he said. "It's a delicate situation."

According to Charles Monaghan, a spokesman for Gov. O'Neill, Wednesday's meeting between Cruz-Aponte and the Gilmans indicates "They're probably closer to some sort of resolution than before yesterday."

"What the governor's office wants to do is get everyone together," Monaghan said.

Monaghan said that there was no future meeting set for all parties concerned, but that the Gilmans had been receptive to the idea of a future session. Cruz-Aponte would only say the lines of communication are open when asked about future meetings with the Gilmans.

Neither the Gilmans nor their attorney were available this morning.

(Talk, Page 5)

TURN PAGE

Talk about lakes

(Continued from Page 1)

Next week an informational meeting among state officials, including members of the DEP and the General Assembly, is scheduled at the state Capitol. A

similar meeting took place earlier this month. Monaghan said that the meeting will be mostly an update but would probably not involve proposals to the Gilmans, who are not scheduled to attend.

State Rep. Edith Prague (D-8th district) said this morning that "everything is under consideration" at the capitol, including eminent domain proceedings if the Gilmans are "unreasonable."

Officials, dam owners to discuss problems

By LEONARD FELSON
Courant Staff Writer
8-1-87

LEBANON — State officials will meet in Hartford Tuesday to discuss ways to solve a longstanding problem at Lake Williams, but an aide to Gov. William A. O'Neill cautioned that a solution is not yet in sight.

Last weekend, the Gilman Bros. Co., which owns water rights at the lake and a 19th-century dam in need of repair, began draining the 247-acre lake. The action has angered 150 lakeside property owners and town officials.

The draining left a stench and hundreds of rotting carcasses of fish lying among stumps along much of the lake bottom.

Despite bitter feelings between residents and the company owners, Lawrence and Charles Gilman, the governor's administrative aide, Marilyn Cruz-Aponte, said Friday

she feels "much more hopeful and encouraged" that the problems can be solved.

The Gilmans began battling the state about repairing the dam seven years ago. Cruz-Aponte met the two brothers Wednesday at a breakfast meeting, which may have marked the first step toward ending the problem.

She said the "casual breakfast" was the first formal discussion with the Gilmans.

No solutions were reached, but Cruz-Aponte emphasized that until this week the relationship between the Gilmans and state and town officials had been "more vinegar in the approach than honey."

Meanwhile, officials from O'Neill's office, the state Department of Environmental Protection and the attorney general's office along with state Rep. Edith G. Prague, D-Columbia, and state Sen.

Kenneth L. Przybysz, D-Montville, are scheduled to meet in Hartford Tuesday.

"Everything will be discussed except the final answer," Cruz-Aponte said. "Nothing specific is in sight, but there's a sense that all parties are frustrated and had it up to here. Maybe out of that frustration will come a creative solution."

Benjamin Warner, DEP's director of water resources, said because the Gilman company owns the dam, the land under the dam and rights to the water, the brothers were exercising their right to drain it last weekend.

Warner said he thought the draining was done in mid-summer to create more pressure for the state and town to buy the dam and water rights.

Neither the Gilmans nor their lawyer could be reached for comment Friday.

Property Owners Mourn Death of a Lake

Middleton Press Aug 29, 1987

By JOE BARTOLOTTA

LEBANON — As his 11-year-old son, Darryl, walked around the parched land that was once the bottom of a lake, Harley Atkins looked around in disgust.

"Don't let this happen anyplace else," mourned Atkins, a resident of Higganum who owns a summer cottage on the lake. "This is terrible."

Atkins is not referring to the recent demise of the New York

"Don't let this happen anyplace else," mourned Atkins, a resident of Higganum who owns a summer cottage on the lake. "This is terrible."

Atkins is not referring to the recent demise of the New York Yankees, another situation he is concerned about. Rather he is referring to Lake Williams in Lebanon, or the nearby marshy area that once was Lake Williams.

"Inevitably," said Atkins, "this could happen to any lake in the state."

Yankees, another situation he is concerned about. Rather he is referring to Lake Williams in Lebanon, or the nearby marshy area that once was Lake Williams.

"Inevitably," said Atkins, "this could happen to any lake in the state."

One month ago, Lake Williams, the fourth-largest lake in Connecticut, was drained by the Gilman Bros. Co., owner of the dam



(Photo by Joe Bartolotta)

This grassy stretch of property in Lebanon used to be Lake Williams but now more closely resembles a marsh, much to the concern of the property's owner, Harley Atkins of Higganum.

and the water rights to the lake. At the time, Gilman Bros. said it was because it needed the water for a fire protection pond near its sheet metal plant in Bozrah. At the same time, the company hoped to examine the sluice gate of the dam, the mechanism that controls the water flow.

"Did you see the size of that pond?" asked Larry Bossie, a resident of Cromwell and summer cottage owner on Lake Williams. "They could have filled the pond without draining the entire lake."

"While our lake was going dry, just down the road the water was overflowing in their fire protection pond."

Bossie and Atkins contend that the lake was drained in order to put pressure on the state to solve the problem facing Gilman Bros. Attempts to contact Gilman Bros. for comment proved unsuccessful.

Ten years ago, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers made an evaluation of the dam, saying it was in need of work. Gilman Bros. had the choice of fixing the dam or doing away with it completely.

At that time, the firm announced it would destroy the dam, but after meeting with people concerned about the lake's future, "an agreement was to be reached and presented to the peo-

ple, but this never happened," according to Atkins.

Since then, the lake has been drained two other times and efforts to bring all concerned sides together on an agreement have been fruitless.

Atkins feels that the state Department of Environmental Protection should not let something like the demise of the lake occur.

"Our interest is originally the safety of the dam," said John Anderson, deputy commissioner of the DEP. "Whatever happens, cost has to be thought of in terms of other needs for the state."

Negotiations among four parties — the lakefront home owners, the DEP, the governor's office and Gilman Bros. — have been limited, and all four parties have never been present at the same negotiating session.

But as what talks that have taken place proceed, the grass which took the place of the water in the rear of both Atkins' and Bossie's cottages continues to grow.

When cattails begin to grow between the grass, the lake has reached yet another stage on its way to becoming a marsh land, according to Bossie, who has been gunning for a few of the cattails in the northern end of the lake by his home.

"I have to pay lakefront property taxes, and I have to drive my kids to the public pool in order for them to swim," remarked Bossie, who went on to say that as a kid he had access to a lake, and he wished that his kids could have the same privilege.

Pointing to a large, decaying fish, one of many that died when the lake was drained, Bossie said, "This is what you used to be able to find here."

Lake delays upset Prague

By JOHN PHILIP
Staff Writer

LEBANON — State Rep. Edith Prague (D-19th Dist.) this morning criticized delays in finding a solution to the Lake Williams ownership problems.

"I'm not very happy with the progress that's been made if you call it that," Prague said.

She said she has yet to see a proposal from the state Department of Environmental Protection to the owners of the lake's dam and water rights that was supposed to be sent her last week.

She also said the last she knew the governor's office, which was preparing the proposals, was at a standstill in its talks with lake owners Lawrence and Charles Gilman.

A spokesman for the governor's office this morning expressed surprised that Prague was unhappy with the progress being made. He said a letter from the DEP outlining proposals for a permanent solution represents "a lot of work and effort and thought."

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Whether it's acceptable or not remains to be seen."

The letter is to be sent officials this week.

The Gilmans last year turned down a purchase proposal from the state when a state-ordered appraisal was about \$1 million below the price that the state had originally offered. This prompted the DEP to scale down its offer to \$500,000 instead of \$1.5 million. In the original proposal, the state, the town and the Gilmans would each pay \$500,000 toward public purchase of the lake and water rights.

Town will wait on Lake Williams until property is reappraised

By JOHN PHILIP
Staff Writer

LEBANON — The town won't act on a state Department of Environmental Protection proposal for a solution to the long-standing problems at Lake Williams until there is agreement on a price with the owners of the dam and water rights.

First Selectman Edward Clark said that the town will request another meeting with the governor's office and the DEP on the DEP's last proposal, which does not contain a final cost figure to the town.

"That's why we've never been to a town meeting before," Clark said.

The DEP last week proposed a joint state/town purchase of the dam and water rights from owners Lawrence and Charles Gilman for \$400,000, an amount turned down by the Gilmans last year. The state would pay one third and the town would pay two thirds.

In a letter to Clark and the Gilmans, the DEP said another appraisal of the property could be made by an appraiser chosen by both the state and the Gilmans.

An original agreement, after

appraisals valuing the property at around \$1.5 million, called for the Gilmans to absorb \$500,000, and the town and state would each pay \$500,000. That bill failed in the General Assembly, however, when a subsequent state-ordered appraisal valued it at around \$400,000, which the state offered to the Gilmans and they turned down.

The DEP is now suggesting another appraisal if "the local community is willing at least to entertain the possibility of contributing its two-thirds share of a higher purchase price," the agency wrote. "Obviously, no commitment could be expected from the community unless and until a new figure was arrived at after a third appraisal."

Clark said, from the town's point of view, "nothing's going to be agreed to in principle or any other way until we get a final figure. We could have your car appraised, and if you didn't want to sell it, there'd be no sale."

The Gilmans were not available this morning, and a lawyer representing them said that she could not comment because that is policy. Nobody from the DEP could say whether or not the

Gilmans had responded to the letter.

State Rep. Edith Prague (D-19th) said, "I think that the third appraisal would be appropriate," and "I think its terribly important that we do something."

She said if this latest proposal does not work, there is still the possibility of the state seizing the dam through eminent domain. She contacted the attorney general's office and was told that under current legislation, it appears that the state may take the property under eminent domain, but the question must be researched further.