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FEATURED

Brown water in Bailey's Pond remains a mystery

Bailey's Pond in Amesbury discolored over weekend

By Jim Sullivan Staff writer Oct 28, 2016

BRYAN EATON/Staff photoTom Cusick and his neighbors around Bailey's Pond in Amesbury are concerned about the muddy color of the pond, which is near Beacon Street and Pleasant Valley Road.

AMESBURY — Bailey's Pond was clear as a bell when Tom Cusick went to work Friday morning. The next day, it was brown.

"The pond is not crystal clear, but it is not like this," Cusick said. "This was obviously a result of some sort of runoff into the pond. It is not tainted like this."

A water and sewer department superintendent by trade, Cusick has lived on the pond since 1987 and is familiar with drainage and development complications. What Cusick awoke to Saturday morning piqued his curiosity enough for him to ride uphill to Haverhill Road, where he photographed what he believes to be serious erosion at the Amesbury Heights construction site after Friday night's heavy rain.

Amesbury Heights, a 240-unit apartment complex due to open next spring, has been under construction just off Route 110 since December and is owned by property management company Corcoran Jennison.

"I can see why a construction site would have erosion issues," Cusick said. "When you are developing a project, you are adding hot top and that is going to create a runoff situation. That is what I believe they ran into up there. They have some really steep slopes that have eroded away because of the heavy rains that came and ran right into this pond."

Runoff has not been much of a concern for people living beside the pond since Alan's Truck Stop closed in the 1990s, according to Cusick, who said he used to pull fish with sores on their bodies out of the pond in the late

1980s. The Beacon Street resident did notice a small runoff while passing an inlet when walking his dog last spring, which he reported to the DPW. But after the severe drought during the summer, last weekend's heavy rains were the first Cusick said produced runoff of such a heavy magnitude.

"It all rolls down" to the Merrimack River, Cusick said. "I don't know what it could be. I would like someone to tell me what it is. By making a site visit up there and taking some photos, it looks like they have some real erosion problems. Now the pond is all tainted. Something did this."

Cusick sent an email to city Conservation Agent John Lopez including a group of pictures of what he found at the construction site earlier in the week.

According to Lopez, the city's Conservation Commission requires a pair of monitors on the Amesbury Heights construction site, the first working for Corcoran Jennison and the second working for the Conservation Commission itself, at the property management company's expense.

While efforts to reach Corcoran Jennison project director Sean McReynolds by phone and email Wednesday and yesterday were unsuccessful, Lopez said both of the required monitors already have contingency plans ready to be implemented once a source of contamination is identified.

Lopez and City Engineer Peter Manor inspected the five tributaries that run into Bailey's Pond yesterday and saw clear, flowing water at each.

"When we arrived at Bailey's Pond, we did notice a significant amount of particulates," Lopez said. "It might be suspended sediment resulting from the significant storm last weekend and those sediments haven't settled back to the bottom yet."

Lopez added that he and Manor plan to revisit the tributaries after the next significant rainfall to see if more sediment has been stirred up by the rain.

"At present, it remains a mystery," Lopez said. "But there is no indication that it is coming from any construction site."

Jim Sullivan covers Amesbury for The Daily News. He can be reached on Twitter @ndnsully, via email at jsullivan@newburyportnews.com or by phone at 978-961-3145.

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