# The Times-Tribune

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2024

# We're All About It

## \$2.00 NEWSSTAND

# **Officials: Probe project that** polluted region waterways CHERMAK





GAUGHAN

**McGLOIN** 

# Dam rehabilitation work led to release of sediment, silt to 1872, and its dam released open an investigation into this matter and determine if

# BY JIM LOCKWOOD

STAFF WRITER vania American Water's nna River.

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rehabilitation project of the No. 7 Reservoir dam in Dun-SCRANTON — The Lack- more that released large Bill Gaughan, Matt McGloin awanna County commis- quantities of silt and sedisioners want a criminal ment that has polluted Roarinvestigation into Pennsyl- ing Brook and the Lackawa- Attorney Mark Powell to

**Good morning** 

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Thursday, Commissioners disaster" to the waterways, and Chris Chermak called on Lackawanna County District

In a statement released into the "environmental as well as a "potential public miles, authorities have said. health threat to thousands of residents.'

The project to upgrade the

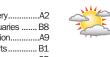
sediment into Roaring Brook and the Lackawanna River, muddying their waters for

Lackawanna County general counsel Donald Frederickson sent a letter to Powell open a criminal investigation No. 7 Reservoir, which dates requesting "that your office

any laws have been violated

that would warrant the filing of criminal charges against any entity(s) or individual(s) responsible for this environmental disaster."

Please see **PROJECT**, Page A4



Windy High: 38° Low: 26°



Weather, B10

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2024

# **PROJECT:** Sediment release came amid work on \$17M rehabilitation

FROM PAGE A1

**A4** THE TIMES-TRIBUNE

In a reply to The Times-Tribune seeking comment, Powell said, "I just received the commissioners' letter and I am well aware of the devastation that has occurred to the river. I plan to meet with the (state) Attorney General's office to determine the best course of action."

lease of sedimen The re

existing structure. The opening of two large-diameter valves to lower the reservoir level for dam work and recent heavy rain caused silt to flow through the valves Turcmanovich had said.

In response to the commissioners' stance, Turcmanovich on Thursday issued the following PAW statement: "The work currently underway on the Dunmore #7 Dam is part of a \$17 million dam

'I see it more as a state responsibility and something DEP would advance to state attorney general's office, if they were going to do anything at

the sediment was believed to thought that a contractor or state. have been released Feb. 2 anyone else would blatantly Roaring Brook, a major trib-River.

that this incident was allowed to occur," Gaughan damaged and polluted watersaid. "It essentially flushed ways throughout the area down the drain the decades and cannot allow this to conof hard work to restore the tinue." Lackawanna River We are asking the district attorney not immediately comment tion projects to larger reserto open an investigation into and said the agency likely this incident so that someone will be held accountable." McGloin added, "Improving and maintaining the quality of life in our area is something that we all take great pride in daily. To have a of clean waterways fear that major miscalculation like this by the water company and DEP is astounding. It has impair them and their aquatpotentially caused damage that could take years for our waterways to recover from. We are urging our district attorney's office to investigate this disaster to determine if any laws have been violated."

during the project at the discharge any sort of pollut-152-year-old reservoir on ant into any of our waterways is outrageous. I would utary of the Lackawanna request a full investigation ity and something DEP into this situation as soon as "I'm absolutely outraged possible. We've worked hard over the years cleaning up

A DEP

"I'm a little surprised," McGurl said about the commissioners' statement. "I see it more as a state responsibilwould advance to state attorney general's office, if they were going to do anything at that level.'

McGurl still can't quite believe that the sediment situation occurred. PAW recently did similar dam rehabilita voirs, including the Nesbitt **Reservoir in Spring Brook** Twp. and the Elmhurst Resducting its own probe of the ervoir straddling Elmhurst and Roaring Brook townships, and those did not have any large-scale releases of silt or sediment. At the No. 7 Reservoir dam project, PAW apparently "didn't have any fail-safe. they didn't have any backup plan," McGurl said. "It was just a colossal blunder, how it Lackawanna River Con- could have happened and the servation Association Senior devastation that it has caused. It's just incredible."

.C5

occurred as the water compa- rehabilitation project ny was working on a \$17 mil- required by PA DEP to lion rehabilitation project of ensure the dam structure the 100 million-gallon reser- remains stable during voir to upgrade the dam extreme weather events and structure for stability and to continue to meet regulations under the state Department with DEP dam safety of Environmental Protection, water company spokeswoman Susan Turcmanovich said last week.

The project, which began in October and targeted for completion in the fall, involves installation of new dam. additional concrete buttresses for stability, a new selective demolition of the released from the dam. Penn-

safely passes the Spillway Design Flood in accordance requirements. In addition to rock dams that were installed to hold sediment back, a larger four-foot high rip-rap dam was recently installed across Roaring Brook to better control silt sediment from flowing downstream. The compapost-tensioned anchors in the ny also closed one of the reservoir's water release valves. which has reduced the volconcrete spillway crest and ume of water currently being

## that level.<sup>3</sup>

### **Bernie McGurl**

Senior project manager, Lackawanna River **Conservation Association** 

sylvania American Water has been working with DEP and will continue to do so in continuing efforts to mitigate and reduce silt from entering the river. All necessary permits were obtained prior to the work commencing, and we are continuing to operate within those permit conditions.'

She added that both valves are now closed.

The commissioners noted

would not comment.

The DEP has been consituation after learning about it Feb. 4.

Environmental advocates ecological damage from the sediment will significantly ic wildlife of macroinvertebrates and fish for some time, perhaps years.

Project Manager Bernie McGurl said he thinks jurisdiction for any investigation Chermak said, "The likely would stay with the

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