

The Times-Tribune

We're *All* About It

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\$2.00 NEWSSTAND

Agency to test water muddied by dam project

BY JIM LOCKWOOD
STAFF WRITER

The state Department of Environmental Protection will test samples of silt-polluted waters of Roaring Brook and the Lackawanna River caused by Pennsylvania American Water's rehabilitation of the No. 7 Reservoir dam in Dunmore, an agency spokeswoman said Friday.

Meanwhile, the reservoir has refilled in recent days after the closing of two old valves in the dam where silty sediment passed through. The water is flowing over the spillway again, a water company spokeswoman said Friday.

Earlier this month, the dam project released large quantities of silt and sediment into Roaring Brook and the Lackawanna River, muddying the waters for miles.

The DEP became aware of the silt and sediment pollution Feb. 4 and has been investigating the situation.

On Wednesday night, The Times-Tribune asked DEP if it was testing the silt-impacted waters of Roaring Brook and the Lackawanna and Susquehanna rivers.

On Friday, a DEP spokeswoman said in an email that a "cause-and-effect study" began with water samples taken from Roaring Brook and the Lackawanna River starting Wednesday and with sampling to continue through the rest of this week.

"On Wednesday, February

Please see **DAM**, Page A5

DAM: DEP expects test results in weeks

FROM PAGE A1

14, an aquatic biologist from DEP's Northeast Regional Office in Wilkes-Barre took water from Roaring Brook in Scranton and Dunmore and the Lackawanna River to do a "cause and effect" study regarding the sediment flowing through the creek as a result of PA American Water's dam rehabilitation project," Connolly said. "The test results of the samples and the cause and effect study should be available in a few weeks. In the meantime, DEP's Division of Dam Safety, Waterways and Wetlands Program, and Clean Water Program continue to investigate the situation."

On Thursday, Lackawanna County Commissioners Bill Gaughan, Matt McGloin and Chris Chermak called on Lackawanna County District Attorney Mark Powell to open a criminal investigation into the "environmental disaster" to the waterways, as well as a "potential public health threat to thousands of residents." Powell said he would discuss the matter with the state attorney general's office.

The dam rehabilitation project, which began in October and was targeted for completion in the fall, was required by the DEP and involves installation of new post-tensioned anchors in the dam, additional concrete buttresses for stability, a new concrete spillway crest and selective demolition of the 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, water company spokeswoman Susan Turcmanovich had said last week.

On Thursday, Turcmanovich said both valves had now been closed.

The Times-Tribune asked on Friday if having both valves closed would mean that Roaring Brook would now run dry for a time, but Turcmanovich said no, because the reservoir had already refilled over recent days and water was again

flowing over the dam's spillway.

A drone photo taken by The Times-Tribune on Monday showed the reservoir body as a large mudhole with Roaring Brook meandering through its silty bed.

Word of the reservoir having refilled in a matter of days surprised Lackawanna River Conservation Association Senior Project Manager Bernie McGurl.

"I can't believe it filled up that quickly," McGurl said. "That'll stop it (the sediment flow) a lot quicker than I had heard several projections earlier."

Asked if the muddied Roaring Brook would now clear up with the reservoir refilled to the spillway, Turcmanovich said, "Clean water is spilling over the top of the dam."

Still, Roaring Brook on Friday had the same brownish color as during the past two weeks. The discoloration remained starkly obvious Friday at Roaring Brook's confluence with the Lackawanna River in South Scranton, where the brown brook water contrasted with the clear water from the river.

Work continues at the dam site, Turcmanovich said.

"We are currently working on alternatives to divert the water so that construction on the primary spillway can continue," Turcmanovich said.

Meanwhile, in regard to the commissioners' call for an investigation, Connolly said Friday that, "The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is conducting its own investigation into the matter as a regulatory agency. Every Pennsylvanian has a constitutional right to clean air, pure water and a safe environment. That's why DEP responded quickly to this incident, has sent out a biologist to test the water in the creek and is continuing to investigate the situation."

Contact the writer:
jlockwood
@scrantontimes.com;
570-209-5893.

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Good morning



Snow showers
High: **33°**
Low: **18°**
Weather, B10