

# The Times-Tribune

We're *All* About It

SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2024

\$2.00 NEWSSTAND



CHRISTOPHER DOLAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Dunmore resident Joseph Buselli speaks Thursday near one of his fishing spots along Roaring Brook in Dunmore.

## ‘THIS IS RUINED’

### Dunmore man raises awareness after sediment pollutes the waters of his cherished fishing spot in Roaring Brook

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DUNMORE — Joseph Buselli’s white Jeep rumbled down a narrow trail near Mill Street on Thursday as the lifelong fisherman pointed out large deposits of brown sediment lining the banks of Roaring Brook.

“This is ruined,” said Buselli, 66, who has been fishing Roaring Brook since he was 8.

Nearly two months ago on Feb. 2, Pennsylvania American Water opened a 48-inch outlet at the No. 7 Reservoir dam to lower the water levels by 15 feet for a dam rehabilitation project about a mile upstream of Buselli’s cherished fishing spot. Soon after the utility company opened the outlet, large quantities of sediment poured out with the water, polluting and

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Silt and other debris is seen Thursday in Roaring Brook in Dunmore.

CHRISTOPHER DOLAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



# BROOK: Islands of released sediment visible along Roaring Brook

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discoloring Roaring Brook and the Lackawanna River for miles.

Although the water is no longer a muddy brown after the utility company closed the outlet Feb. 12, the islands of sediment are immediately apparent along the stream.

"It was picturesque," Buselli said. "You had to be here."

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection cited the water company March 7 with five violations of department regulations and the Clean Streams Law of Pennsylvania stemming from the sediment release. As part of its notice of violation, the DEP ordered the water company to provide a remediation plan for the damage.

The water company responded to the notice in a March 20 letter, saying it was "fully committed to addressing and correcting this situation," but it is too early to create a remediation plan.

Pennsylvania American Water hired Harrisburg-based engineering and environmental consulting firm Skelly and Loy to undertake macroinvertebrate sampling, physical stream characterization and in-stream water quality monitoring. The utility company included with its response a plan of study from Skelly and Loy that provided an outline for the analysis.



CHRISTOPHER DOLAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

## Silt and other debris Thursday along the banks of Roaring Brook in Dunmore.

As part of its preliminary reconnaissance, Skelly and Loy identified two areas for likely remediation: Roaring Brook between the Ash and Myrtle street bridges, and Roaring Brook at the confluence of the Lackawanna River.

While those locations are highly visible to the public, Buselli, of Dunmore, wanted to call attention to the less visible state of Roaring Brook east of the Mill Street Bridge, or Bunker Hill Bridge, in hopes of having it identified for remediation.

Skelly and Loy proposes to set up nine monitoring stations from the Roaring Brook headwaters upstream of No.

7 Reservoir to about 500 feet downstream of the Lackawanna River's confluence with Roaring Brook, although the Lackawanna River Conservation Association is advocating to extend the monitoring to the confluence of the Susquehanna River after reports of cloudy conditions extending into Luzerne County.

The closest downstream station to Buselli's highlighted stretch of water will be between Ash and Myrtle streets near East Scranton Little League, and the nearest upstream station is set to be downstream of Little Roaring Brook, according to

Skelly and Loy's plans.

The firm also marked the Mill Street Bridge as one of 19 photography monitoring spots, spanning from around 250 feet downstream of the No. 7 dam to the Davis Street Bridge.

After parking his Grand Cherokee in a muddy dirt roundabout along Roaring Brook, Buselli recalled his reaction to seeing the stream when it was first flooded with sediment.

"I cried," he said, removing his glasses to wipe his eyes as Roaring Brook crashed over a small, rocky waterfall behind him.

Buselli volunteers to help

stock Roaring Brook with trout each year, and he and other volunteers have spent about 30 years working to clean up the popular summertime recreation spot.

Normally, they stock the stream with trout four times a year, starting shortly before the first day of trout fishing season. This year, opening day is April 6, and they would have stocked March 15 if it weren't for the sediment, he said.

"We're not going to put fish in to die," Buselli said.

Roaring Brook is home to a diverse population of fish, including brown trout, rainbow trout, golden trout, brook trout, smallmouth and largemouth bass, catfish, bluegills, sunfish and perch, Buselli said. There are also minks, otters, beavers, herons, black bears and the occasional bald eagle, he said.

The sediment chokes out the food supply for the fish and smothers their eggs, he said.

"The eggs that were laid in the fall in the ground, under rocks ... they're not going to hatch because they don't have any oxygen," he said.

Trout will feed on just about anything, "but there is nothing left in here," Buselli said.

"It's like going to McDonald's and only getting one french fry," he said.

He also worried about contamination from the sediment.

"Would you eat something that you caught out of here now?" he said.

Buselli pointed to potential logistics issues of bringing in heavy equipment to remove the sediment. The section of Roaring Brook has steep banks with railroad tracks on one side, and Buselli described the challenges of permitting to allow machinery in the water.

In an emailed statement in response to questions from The Times-Tribune, including the potential for remediation along Roaring Brook near Mill Street, navigating the precipitous terrain with machinery and a timeline, Pennsylvania American Water spokeswoman Susan Turcmanovich noted the information from Skelly and Loy is preliminary.

"Our discussions with them, and with the DEP, will be ongoing as monitoring and surveillance in the area continues," Turcmanovich said. "Decisions on remediation will be based on the results of the investigation and discussions with the DEP."

Asked about his ideal outcome, Buselli said two words: "Fix it."

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