



JAMES CARBONE

Lower Yaphank Lake drainage was halted after sediment was flushed into Carmans River.

## YAPHANK

# Partly drained lake concerns neighbors

BY CARL MACGOWAN

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Brookhaven's decision this month to suspend the draining of Lower Yaphank Lake in Yaphank has left residents bitter over the latest delay in a decadeslong effort to restore the lake.

Civic leaders this week said they were disappointed that the project screeched to a temporary halt just three months after the town removed boards to drain the pond. After the lake is drained, the town plans to use heavy equipment to scrape the lake bottom and remove invasive plants and excess sediment.

Town officials suspended the \$2.5 million project after discovering more than 300 cubic yards of sediment flowed into a section of Carmans River. The sediment could harm brook trout in the midst of their spawning season, town and state environmental officials said.

Chad Trusnovec, who has lived along the lake for decades, said he was "way beyond frustrated" by the delay.

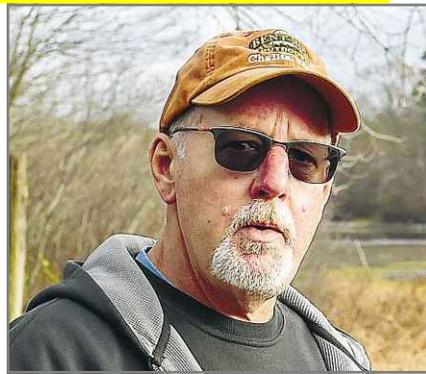
"I'm flat-out angry right now, to be frank with you," said Trusnovec, vice president of the Yaphank Taxpayers and Civic Association. "Every time you turn around, it's something else. . . . It's one step forward and two steps back."

Brookhaven Supervisor Edward P. Romaine said Tuesday the town plans to resume the work sometime in December. But it will use a new approach to draining the lake, he said, adding that the town has hired an engineering firm to recommend a new method.

He blamed the release of excess sediment on the challenges of cleaning up a lake choked with weeds and debris without harming wildlife.

"It's almost impossible to filter this silt, so we're going to have to go much slower than we thought we could," Romaine said. "Our goal is not to silt up the river. Our goal is to avoid that."

He added the suspension would cause



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Chad Trusnovec lives on the lake.

a minor delay in completing the project, which was supposed to be finished by next spring.

Lower Yaphank Lake, also known as Lily Lake, was carved centuries ago out of the Carmans River to serve the region's burgeoning mill industry. Yaphank residents say their community was built around the lake and its sister, nearby Upper Lake.

Kevin McAllister, founder of Sag Harbor-based Defend H2O, said the Lower Lake should be converted back to a river. Doing so, he said, would restore the river's natural habitat by improving water flow. He opposes using heavy machinery to scrape the lake.

"They're not going to dry this out," by draining the lake, McAllister said. "This is going to be a messy, messy job. Ultimately that mess will find its way into the stream flow. It's not thought out well. It's acquiescing to the community and their desire to hold onto artificial lakes."

Linda Petersen, president of the civic association, said she trusted town officials to find a solution to the issue. She estimated two-thirds of the lake had been drained before work was halted.

"It's a shame because it's a lot of money to be spent," she said. "The way it looks now is really dreadful."

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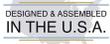
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