

## Lake Anasagunticook Dam Report

While there is little visible progress over the six months since MEMA ordered all gates to the Whitney Brook dam remain open, the State's deadline for repairs remains December 31, 2007. What has been obvious to all of us are the affects of low water levels on both the beauty and use of Lake Anasagunticook. Recreational use of the lake for swimming, boating and fishing was compromised this summer by safety concerns created by exposed or nearly exposed rocks and by the unpleasant mud-plains. There is concern for the plants, critters and fish who have lost their protected habitats in the two significant marshes or wetlands of the lake. Fish have also been stranded in pools left behind as Whitney Brook water levels dropped as well. Canton shop owners have reported a significant drop in business this summer, which was attributed to the lack of access from the lake down Whitney Brook and the effects of the low water levels. The private boat ramp commonly used by the public off Rt. 140 has fallen into disrepair and the low water levels contributed to its degeneration because of the increased difficulty to launch and retrieve boats. Plant growth in areas normally deep underwater has raised awareness of "new" plant life.

Although there has been no obvious change in water clarity, the deeper sections of the lake continue to be devoid of oxygen during August and September. No oxygen has a negative affect on deep-water fish populations and it is unclear whether ice fishermen will see a difference this winter. Because the shoreline is exposed during the normal winter draw down of the lake, the immediate affect of low water on the shoreline habitats last summer may not have been as harsh as predicted.

The lake is a valuable resource to the Towns of Canton and Hartford and not just of value to waterfront property owners. Property values have been linked to water quality but loss of water quality has not yet been documented. Low water levels, however, have certainly affected the public's use of the lake and its appearance and we are very concerned that the lake may be in danger of serious harm from which it may not recover.

There is no doubt that everyone wants a permanent resolution of the long-standing concerns about dam safety and water level management. It is clear to us that we all need to work together to find a lasting solution. State officials have expressed willingness to help but this is a unique situation for MEMA and the Attorney General's Office. Precedents are being set with every step taken by the State or local officials. The Core Group has been meeting regularly since July and we welcome your concerns and suggestions and ask for your support, patience and goodwill.

Core Group for a Permanent Solution,  
Malcolm "Mac" Ray, Chair (Canton)  
Dave Bowen, Vice Chair (Hartford)  
Judy Hamilton, Secretary (Hartford)  
Polly Bussiere (Canton)  
Lisa Cummings (Canton)  
Debi Hutchins (Canton)  
Mike Poulin (Hartford)  
Rick Ray (Canton)  
Rob Turnbull (Canton)