



News-Times photo by Dave Robinson

Cleanup

City workers clear the banks of the Upper Kohanza Reservoir of some of the estimated 2,000 fish which died when the shallow waters' temperature became too warm.

City continues to bake in 'big league' drought

By Michele Derus
News-Times Staff

DANBURY — The hot August sun is baking lawns, killing fish and accelerating the depletion of already low municipal reservoirs.

And the year-long drought is molding the city's visage to fit its status as most water-short community in Connecticut.

July marked the end of a five-month dry spell comparable to the heart of the mid-1960s drought here and there is no relief in sight, meteorologist Mel Goldstein reported today. Goldstein heads the Western Connecticut weather center.

"This is it," he said grimly. "We're in the big leagues." March to August rainfall was 11.8 inches — 9.1 inches below normal and just shy of the 11.5 inch record low recorded in a five month period during 1965, Goldstein said.

There has been no appreciable rain since Independence Day, the soonest a soaking rain could arrive is Saturday "and even that will not get us out of trouble," he said. "Conceivably, this could be in a long-range drought comparable to the 1960s."

Brown, curling grass throughout the city is a constant reminder of the drought. Another is the weekly reservoir measurement, which dipped to 57 percent of the network's collective 3.5 billion gallon capacity last weekend.

Although this represents 6½ months worth of water, it is about a third below normal, despite voluntary indoor water use cuts begun last fall and mandatory outside water use rationing begun July 6.

Danbury is in worse shape

than other communities because of a rain pattern in which storms seem to have avoided the city, and because of a 19 percent population gain and corporate boom in the past decade which was unmatched by increases in water supply or storage.

Residents living around the Upper Kohanza Reservoir, a small pond whose waters were pumped to the deeper West Lake Reservoir to minimize hot weather evaporation, were horrified to find hundreds of dead fish at the reservoir Monday.

Public Works Director Daniel Garamella explained that the fish died because the reservoir was only five feet deep and its waters were heated to uninhabitable levels.

"We have no control over this," he said. "We had to pump some water out or would have lost it."

Public works crews spent Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning clearing the water and beaches of the dead fish, which rapidly decayed in the hot sun and created a strong stench. Workers estimated the fish kill between 500 and 2,000.

"It was a mess," Garamella said.

Although Danbury has other small reservoirs whose waters were pumped to West Lake or the city's other major reservoir, Margerie, "this is the only one with a major fish kill," he reported.

Danbury's drinking water supply has been dropping steadily from its two-thirds full level last spring, despite an 8 to 10 percent reduction in total use from last year.

Water use averaged 7.23 million gallons daily last week, down from an average 7.84 mil-

lion gallons daily a year ago, reported Pat Ellsworth, a civil engineer who works for the city.

Last week's figures also reflect a slightly stronger conservation effort than the previous week, when daily use averaged 7.27 million gallons daily, she reported. For the first three weeks of July, water usage was 10 percent lower than the same period last year.

Complaints about violations of mandatory outdoor rationing have become infrequent, according to Garamella. He pointed to declining water use figures as proof of widespread compliance with an alternate day, two-hour outdoor water use program that bans washing cars by hose and filling swimming pools.

But Garamella acknowledged there is truth in recurring reports of night-time pool fillups and surreptitious lawn watering at some locations.

"Who knows what happens after 10 o'clock at night, when no one is looking?" he said. "Our people can't be everywhere all the time."

Residents have pointed out one inequity in the city's even-odd day rationing program: both July and August have 31 days, which gives people with odd-numbered addresses two consecutive days for watering and people with odd-numbered addresses a two-day way.

Starting this month, the 31st will become a "bonus" day and everyone can water lawns and gardens from 6-8 p.m., Garamella said.

While residents cooperate to various degrees with Danbury's conservation program, city officials are mulling a consultants See CITY, Page 8

City continues to bake

Continued from Page 1
report showing how to double the existing water supply.

Currently, reservoirs yield about 6.5 million gallons daily — nearly a million gallons less than daily use.

According to Waterbury consultant Roald Haested, Danbury could skim Lake Kenosia to West Lake Reservoir, divert Ball Pond Brook to Margerie Reservoir and expand the two reservoirs for a collective potential yield of 13 million gallons daily.

The projects would cost more

than \$2 million just for design and construction, entail a host of political and financial obstacles, and take at least 10 months to put into operation.

Mayor James Dyer said he will meet with Haested, Garamella, City Engineer Jack Schweitzer and others today to discuss the report.

Within six months, Dyer predicted he will present a water supply expansion program which he said will entail "some tough decisions."

AUG 5 1981