

VII. IMPACT ON COMMUNITY AND PROPERTY VALUES

1. How would the removal of the water in Lake Neepaulin create an environmentally negative or an unhealthful influence on the image of the community?

If Lake Neepaulin is drained many unsettling consequences could occur. A 25-acre pit, with puddles of muddy, stagnant water and sky-high spires of marshy weeds and thorns would exist in the middle of our once lovely little community. Mosquitoes and bugs would multiply infinitesimally. Fish and wildlife would die. Rotting flesh would create a strong stench. Innumerable skeletal remains would be seen everywhere. Disease would easily spread. The appearance of bears, attracted by decaying carnage would become numerous. The image of the community would plummet.

2. How might a negative image of the community encourage the collapse of property values in Lake Neepaulin?

In today's slow real estate market, a home must be 'showcased' so that a buyer will choose it over all of the others. Selling a home before the competition does is most crucial. Therefore, the seller must try to make his home more appealing than all the others that are on the market. The image of the community falls under the umbrella of making a home more attractive. If the surroundings of a community are undesirable, the potential home hunter will be turned off, and the homes in the community will stay on the market for a long period of time. However, if the surroundings of the community are more enticing, the homes will move quickly.

Just how many people do you think would be attracted to the type of environment that a swampy marsh would create if it were to exist in the middle of Lake Neepaulin's community? Most house hunters would not even want to look for a future home in such a shabby area. Realtors would become reluctant to show Lake Neepaulin homes to potential customers and would redirect their clients to more desirable communities. Then, the only people who would actually purchase a home in Lake Neepaulin would be those who could not afford to purchase a home in a more affluent community.

3. How else could the reduction in the value of homes in Lake Neepaulin harm the residents?

Lake Neepaulin would be harmed from a devaluation of the homes in the community. Since the asking price for homes in Lake Neepaulin would definitely not be competitive with the asking price of homes in other communities, the Lake Neepaulin home would be worth very little, particularly in today's stagnant market, and even in a flourishing market, the Lake Neepaulin home would be worth much less than what it might have been worth if the image of the community had been better.

Lake Neepaulin residents will face many problems if the lake is drained, and the community image is negative. People who place their homes on the market will be stymied by an inability to sell the home. They will not be able to relocate at the exact moment that they need to move. They will not be able to participate in a competitive market. They will not receive a profit, and they will not be able to afford the purchase of a larger home.

4. If I am not interested in selling my home, either now or anytime in the near future, why should I even care about the negative influence that the draining of the lake will have on property values?

The prices obtained from the sale of homes in a community impact on everyone in the entire community, whether they are selling their home or not, because the town's "rateables" are connected to house sales. If few, or if no, homes are sold, or if the homes are sold for a price below the fair value of what the home should be worth, the revenue generated from the property taxes will be low. When the town does not obtain adequate revenue, the difference must be recovered so that the town can continue to function and to provide necessary services. Normally, the way a town replenishes a dearth in its revenue is through the taxation of its residents. The citizens of the community will be expected to pay more for many services that have already been implemented through former assessments. Sometimes these established services may even be withdrawn, and frequently new services will never be offered at all.

If the "rateables" in Lake Neepaulin decline because the lake has been drained, the alternatives necessary for re-supplying the loss could become far more expensive than the expenditure to repair the dam itself. The out-of-pocket expense for replenishing the loss of revenue resultant from the decrease in "rateables" will definitely fall upon the shoulders of the taxpayer, and the cost could be very pricey. Likewise, the reduction or elimination of already established services that are no longer affordable will impede the future progress of the community.

5. My home is far from the lake. I can not even see the lake from my house. Why would my property values be affected by the disappearance of Lake Neepaulin?

Even if one can't view the lake from his house, he still will be affected from the loss of the lake. In fact, if the lake should be drained, all homes in Lake Neepaulin will be affected because all Lake Neepaulin residents will have to pay additional taxes to increase the funding from the loss of township revenue. Also many currently enjoyed amenities will be removed.

All Lake Neepaulin residents will also be affected if the lake is drained because there will be a reduction in the value of everyone's property. The lake- front homes, which are usually a barometer for the value of the homes in the rest of the lake community, will be worth far less once the lake is drained. Hence, if the lake disappears altogether, the homes directly on the lake will experience the

most dramatic reduction in value. This effect will ripple throughout the entire community. The lake view properties will experience the next degree of decline. Then will be the first tier of homes on the hillside. This cycle will continue on and on, in gradations, until every house within the lake community experiences a loss in the value of property. Accepting the responsibility for repairing the dam in Lake Neepaulin will act as an insurance policy that will help protect all members of the Lake Neepaulin community from property devaluation.

6. Is there any truth to the rumor that if Lake Neepaulin were drained, those who currently experience well water problems will face even greater problems and those who presently have no problems at all soon will?

Yes. A hydrologist has indicated that the hydrostatic pressure from the lake would lower the water levels of the wells in the area, causing some wells not to function at all and others to have low volumes of water. This problem is of great concern because so many people already experience problems with wells.

7. Does Lake Neepaulin play a significant role in suppressing fires within the community and could the refusal to rehabilitate the dam hinder the suppression of fires?

Yes. The Sussex-Wantage fire department, along with Friends of Lake Neepaulin, has constructed a dry fire hydrant by the beach area so that a near-by source of water might be readily and quickly available to help suppress a large and encompassing fire in Lake Neepaulin. The construction of a second dry fire hydrant is being considered for positioning near the dam.

The fire department has indicated that, although it has not, so far, utilized the lake to suppress any fire in Lake Neepaulin, dependence on the lake is very much necessary because the water in the lake can help save lives and property if a huge fire rages throughout the community. If the lake is not available as a back up for additional water, the tankers will have to drive to another district in order to obtain this water. Since time is of the essence when fighting a fire, many lives and much property could be destroyed if the tankers had to travel a great distance.