

Residents upset over plans to clear 420 trees at LaDue

By JOAN DEMIRJIAN

Proposed logging of 420 trees around the 42-acre LaDue Reservoir in Auburn is drawing protests from some neighbors of the property owned by the city of Akron.

Auburn residents John and Tracy Clark asked Township Trustees during a Monday meeting for assistance.

There are about 20 acres of farm field where logging will not take place and 12 acres of water, Mr. Clark said. "So 420 trees will be

removed on about 15 acres that are left."

The assumption is that the city will use an existing road to the property to get to the trees. Mr. Clark said he has tried to talk to Akron city officials, but cannot get any answers.

City representatives were invited to a meeting of neighbors last week at the Bainbridge Library but they did not show up, he said.

The Clarks said they live across from the property that is bounded

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by Bartholomew, Taylor May, Thorpe and Auburn roads. "We bought our property some 20 years ago knowing there was a reservoir there, and it would remain a reservoir. What the city is going to do is change it from an ecosystem that buffers the water before it enters the watershed and turning it into a cesspool."

They first learned about the logging while walking around the area. The trees were all marked with paint. They noticed again later that the trees were marked with fresh paint. Up to 90 percent would be destroyed, the Clarks said.

Later, the Clarks received a notice from Akron about the logging that would generate from \$50,000 to \$75,000 in revenue for the city. Mrs. Clark noted that the logging will have an impact on all the surrounding areas. Flooding could be a result, she said.

The Wendell R. LaDue Reservoir is in Auburn and Troy townships. It was completed in 1962 after the Black Brook and Bridge Creek were dammed for the reservoir. Akron owns 8,791 acres in Auburn and Troy in Geauga County for the reservoir. About 1,477 acres are under water.

Mr. Clark noted that the Akron Watershed Superintendent Jessica Glowczewski issued a letter last August to neighbors reporting that a patrol of the property in the Auburn, Bartholomew and Thorpe roads neighborhood revealed that a large portion of the Akron property was identified as being illegally used for all-terrain and other off-road vehicles.

The city considers criminal trespass, especially with motorized vehicles, as a serious offense and actively prosecutes offenders, she said. It causes erosion, and ATV use increases the amount of sediment and pollutants that can make their way to Bridge Creek, as well as destroying valuable sensitive natural areas.

Bridge Creek flows into LaDue Reservoir.

then to Lake Rockwell, which is the water supply for Akron. The city purchased upstream properties to act as natural buffers to reduce the amount of sediment and pollutants that reach the Lake Rockwell Reservoir.

During the patrol, there was evidence of illegal timber cutting and maple tree tapping, Ms. Glowczewski said in the letter, and the city takes those offenses seriously.

A second letter that was circulated to neighbors of the area last fall noted that Akron would be logging the site, the Clarks said.

"They will log, and our taxes will pay," Mr. Clark said referring to the money Akron would make from the felled trees. "We will have to pay for any repairs to the roads from the logging trucks, and they don't pay a single dime to the township."

In addition, he said, they will be removing the black cherry trees that are used by the Indiana bat for nesting.

In a phone conversation he had with a representative of the city, Mr. Clark said he was told the logging was a pilot program. "So that means there is the potential to log the 9,000 acres."

Auburn Road Superintendent Emerick Gordon said the township can ask the Geauga County Sheriff's Office to put out scales to weigh the logging trucks. While the township can't stop the logging, "we can make them honor the weight limit," Mr. Gordon said.

The site is zoned passive open space, and Auburn Zoning Inspector Frank Kitko noted Monday that logging is considered agriculture and is exempt from zoning.

Mr. Clark said, "I don't have an issue with logging, but when you do it in a manner with a pilot program and don't want to talk to anyone that is very concerning. It doesn't pass the test of what is better for the environment. There should be a plan in place by Akron that covers the recovery of disturbed soils to prevent those soils from going into water sources or on roads where the soils will get washed back to the water source."

storm-water protection plan for the proposed logging. A plan should be in place to minimize run-off water after the trees are removed. The run-off water can cause algae in drinking water, he noted.

"The reason is to protect the water source for everyone and especially where everyone is on a private well."

With the nesting period for the Indiana bat in March, Akron has to do the logging before the nesting season starts otherwise it will have to wait until October, Mr. Clark said.

He said logging has the potential for destroying the water's ability to seep back into the aquifer. It can increase the erosion that can cause the blue green algae growth. It eventually ends up down river in Lake Erie, he said.

Auburn Trustee Patrick J. Cavanagh suggested that residents contact Ohio Rep. Sarah LaTourette, R-Chester, as a public voice in the issue.

Trustee Michael Troyan said they can send a letter to Akron and contact the Geauga County Prosecutor's Office as well.

He said Tuesday, "The trees are part of the rural atmosphere. You don't want it to turn into a mud hole. I understand their concerns." He said the township will be looking into working with the Geauga County Engineer to put a performance bond in place regarding the weight limits on the roads.

"We take it seriously. They are our constituents and if there is a problem we will help them out," Mr. Troyan said. Akron can't be forced into any action because they have a right to log the property, "however many people don't want trees removed in Auburn and turning it into a desert," he said. "And if they get away with this, where do they stop?"

Mr. Clark said he will be busy making more calls. "If someone can prove to me that it involves the best forest management practices, I'm all for it. My experience and