

Goose problem for York Water District, too

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August 26, 2009 2:00 AM

YORK — The York Water District is having a problem with Canada Geese similar to that of Kittery, with the concern the birds will pollute the town's drinking water, according to Superintendent Don Neumann.

"We have problems with geese at Chases Pond," said Neumann. "We're looking at options. The problem started in the last couple of years. At times, we've had quite a few geese in the pond, hovering around the intake. ... Last year we drove them out."

The crew used "subtle harassment," he said, mostly the result of noise from work done on the dam. The geese didn't leave Chases Pond, he said, but went to the other side.

Neumann estimates two dozen geese were on Chases Pond this year.

"We haven't yet applied," Neumann said when asked if the district had requested a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to shoot the geese. Shooting was a method recently employed by the Kittery Water District at Boulter Pond in York to rid that pond of the geese.

Kittery Water District Superintendent Mike Rogers shot five geese in June and July after getting the necessary permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on June 16.

It was a decision that upset nearby New Boston and Thomas road residents in York, who said more humane measures, such as changing the inviting habitat, should have been used.

Residents also raised the question of whether water quality tests showed contamination from fecal bacteria. Rogers said he wanted to be proactive, and not wait until e-coli showed up on the water or someone became sick.

"The treatment plant will treat most substances," said Neumann, "(but) you have to know what that is. It's a consistent stream of water. Obviously, the more chemicals we have to add, it equates to more cost, we have to think of the ratepayer. We want to do most efficient thing."

Spokesmen for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have said requests to shoot Canada Geese are common. Lethal and non-lethal measures are employed to cull large geese populations, they said.

Nowhere was the similar issue of bird strikes more public than in New York City this past January, when US Airways Capt. Chesley Sullenberger safely landed his plane in the Hudson River after a flock of geese collided with the engines, shutting both down.

New York City officials planned to trap and kill up to 2,000 Canada Geese living near LaGuardia and Kennedy airports in June and July, during moulting season when the birds can't fly, the Associated Press reported in June.

A spokesman for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in New York said killing the geese will not solve the problem, as other geese will only move into the inviting environments.

"They love short cut lawns, they love to be near water bodies," said Stephen Musso, executive vice president of the ASPCA. "We've basically eradicated all types of their predators to such a point they are flourishing. Once we get rid of those birds, others birds move in. We have to collectively deal with the problem. It takes a village. Their village is the east coast, that's their village."

Musso suggests the use of dogs to scare the geese, habitat modification, and egg addling, which terminates embryo development.

A drug permitted for use in New York, which geese eat, said Musso, is OvoControl G. It contains a drug that separates the egg white from the yolk. Another method, he said, is applying oil to eggs in the nest, which prevents the shell from being porous and from hatching.

"We should be taking action in a humane way," he said. "Unfortunately, what everybody wants to do is kill the birds; that is a very short-sighted solution."

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