

# Residents hold 'Operation Clean Sweep' at pond

By Chanc E VanWinkle  
ITEM STAFF

The sun had yet to burn the chill out of the 8 o'clock spring air Saturday morning when at least 15 Clinton and Lancaster residents living around South Meadow Pond gradually gathered at the boat dock for this year's 'Operation Clean Sweep.' I shivered as Wayne Paradis offered me a Nypro-donated trash bag and some gloves. Veteran trash-picking residents had already started working their way up the road, but there was no worry of being left out; there was plenty of trash to go around. Last year after the clean-up there were 80 bags of it.

The clean-up was part of the Wachusett Chamber of Commerce-sponsored "Clinton Operation Clean Sweep" and was organized by South Meadow Pond and Wildlife Association President Dianne Paradis.

Although the group doesn't manage to have a trash day every year, it is something that the residents have been doing off and on for about 20 years. Last year's effort was the first trash pick-up in a while — the reason behind the huge mess. Last year's work made this year's trash somewhat less intimidating, although there was still an interesting collection of mangled bicycles, box springs, hot water heaters and beer bottles making their home along the roadway and in the surrounding meadows and wetlands.

Between the trash and the weedy plant Variable Milfoil, South Meadow, Coachlace and Mossy Ponds wouldn't have a chance if they didn't have such dedicated caretakers.

Just weeks ago, the South Meadow Pond and Wildlife Association learned that the matching funds grant it applied for in January had been approved by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management. State Rep. Harold P. Naughton Jr., D-Clinton, recognized the pond's keepers in an announcement, saying that the local residents deserved a tremendous degree of thanks and appreciation for their efforts in spearheading the preservation projects.



Item Photos/CHANCE VANWINKLE

Jean Sifleet, a South Meadow Pond resident, cleans up trash Saturday during "Operation Clean Sweep" in the ponds area on the Clinton-Lancaster town line.

*As I reached for an abandoned Vodka bottle, my inappropriate street shoes sinking into the rain-soaked mud, I realized that most of the trash was probably carried to the shoreline and into the ponds by rainwater run-off. Styrofoam cups were not the rainwater's only cargo — it most certainly would be saturated with nutrient-rich fertilizers and other dissolved waste products that would feed the pond's Milfoil and water lilies. The lilies were already peaking up through the water's surface in the basins surrounding South Meadow Pond Island.*

The lilies, pretty as they may be, use a lot of oxygen that the fish living in the ponds need and also make boating and swimming a murky prospect. Why, however, should the Department of Environmental Management award 36 similar grants for water testing and treatment just this year and up to 200 grants since its inception seven years ago for something that could be construed as a recreational problem?

Consider that oceans, rivers, streams, lakes and ponds have sustained human life and commerce for centuries, a fact that

is no less true today. In fact, the world's second largest lake — Lake Victoria in East Africa — is facing the exact same problems as Coachlace, South Meadow and Mossy ponds.

On April 15, the New England Aquarium opened Nyanja! (meaning "lake" in the Ugandan dialect Bantu) Africa's Inland Sea — an exhibit depicting the watershed of the Nile river

and the problems that human activity has created for the ecosystem there.

Dr. Jerry R. Schubel, president of the New England Aquarium, surmises the importance of such an exhibit "Much of what we learn from Lake Victoria can be applied to threatened freshwater habitat

■ Continued on page seven



A styrofoam Dunkin' Donuts cup lies abandoned on the shore South Meadow Pond in Clinton.

## Residents hold Operation Clean Sweep

■ from front page

in New England and around the world."

Lake Victoria has a non-native plant problem similar to problems locally. The Water Hyacinth, like the non-native Milfoil in the Clinton Ponds, is prematurely aging Lake Victoria. The plant was brought to Africa by colonists and was accidentally introduced into the wild. The building of roads and clearing of wetlands in exchange for farmlands contributed to the nutrient-rich water run-off that was channeling sediments and pollutants into the lake, which overfed the Hyacinth. The monstrous plant was on display beside the native crocodiles, frogs, birds and fish and several photographs showed entire inlets completely choked by the Hyacinth, with could double its size in two weeks in the right conditions.

While the Clinton Ponds will, because of the grant, have the Variable Milfoil contained by spot treatment with herbicide, the African lake has successfully contained the hyacinth through the

use of a "biological control." Weevils that eat the Hyacinth plant were introduced by the thousands and have munched the Hyacinth down to a manageable size. The exhibit will run through the summer.

Although the Clinton/Lancaster ponds do not feed and financially support the community as does Lake Victoria, it is no less important to the identity of this town.

Naughton said it right. "The various ponds of Clinton, which will be positively impacted by this project, make up much of the history and fabric of this community."