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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

" Poetry is language at its

"I wouldn't want to swim in that'

 Residents worry about state of Dartmouth's Russell Lake
By BILL POWER Staff Reporter

Russell Lake in Dartmouth looked from a distance Friday like an oversized mudhole.

The dismal condition of the water was even more apparent near the edge of the lake on a quick tour with Russell Lake Drive resident Dorothy Cuff.

"Last year, it was so clear you could even see little schools of fish," said the regular visitor to the lake on the north side of Portland Street.

From a little dock she and her husband Eric recently put into the water at the end of a winding path through the woods, she looked out at the muddied expanse of suburban water and shook her head in disgust.

"And they call this the City of Lakes," she said. "If that is true, how can there be this reckless disregard for such a beautiful, pristine body of water?"

Russell Lake is encircled by new construction.

Many people in the sprawling subdivision are concerned the little lake that was once home to wildlife and a great spot to paddle a canoe has seemingly been converted into a gigantic mud puddle.

At a bus stop on Russell Lake Drive, area resident Pat Walsh considered the brown expanse of water before her.

"It used to be so beautiful and clear," she said. "All I see now is a muddy lake. I wouldn't want to swim in that."

Clayton Developments has a big development underway nearby called Russell Lake West, but senior vice-president Mike Hanusiak said the company is as concerned about the condition of the lake as local residents are.

He blamed its muddy condition on a culvert at the north end of the lake and said numerous safeguards are in place to protect the end of the lake where Russell Lake West is taking shape.

"There is a 48-inch culvert at the north end of the lake that was running chocolate brown yesterday during the heavy rain," Mr. Hanusiak said.

And there are other paths for water to follow into the lake, he said.

During an exceptionally wet June, the environmental safeguards in place near the construction site demonstrated their effectiveness, he said.



Russell Lake resident Dorothy Cuffe says the housing development across the water is causing silt to run into the Dartmouth lake and choke off marine life. (Eric Wynne / Staff)

most distilled and
most powerful. "

Rita Dove

Concern over the state of the lake Friday prompted Clayton Developments to bring in divers to check the safeguards, which include a series of detention ponds and some protective booms near the edge of the lake.

"We know it is not our development that is the source of the discolouration, but at the same time we're very concerned about it," Mr. Hanusiak said.

Provincial and municipal environment inspectors were at the scene in mid-afternoon and an investigation was continuing.

Deborah Story, a spokeswoman for Halifax Regional Municipality, said inspectors believe wind and heavy rain contributed to the muddying of Russell Lake.

"We're watching and monitoring the situation very carefully," she said.

Coun. Bill Karsten (Portland-East Woodlawn) said investigators implicated an entry point at the north end of the lake, and not the Russell Lake West development, as the source of the discolouring sediment.

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