

Petition on Canton dam reaches Augusta

By **Mary Standard**, *Special to the Sun Journal*

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AUGUSTA - State officials met with members of the Anasagunticook Dam Core Committee on Friday and received a petition asking to resolve the controversy involving the dam on Whitney Brook in Canton.

Lake residents from the towns of Canton and Hartford have been affected by the lowering of the water level in the lake this summer.

Ray Fortier was ordered in May to open the overflow sluice gates by Maj. Gen. John W. Libby, commissioner of the state Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management. Libby ordered the gates open to ensure public safety and avoid a possible breach of the dam.

Fortier has owned the dam for 20 years and has repeatedly ignored orders to fix it. However, the latest communication to Fortier from Libby in September explains the amount of fines that will be assessed if Fortier fails to act.

The petition from residents of Canton and Hartford asks that the state use its authority to assist the towns to bring about new ownership of the dam - from Fortier to some municipal control.

Hartford Selectmen Chairman David Bowen served as spokesman Friday for the Dam Core Committee when it gathered in Augusta. In addition to Bowen, members of the committee who attended were Polly Bussiere representing a lake association, Robert Turnbull representing the Millpond Association, Jackie Conant, and Canton Selectman Rick Ray. Mitzi Turnbull was also present.

Robert McLeer, director of the Maine Emergency Management Association, and David Sait, director of operations at MEMA, met with the committee along with state Sen. Bruce Bryant, state Rep. Terry Hayes, and House candidate Sheryl Briggs of Mexico.

Bowen presented the petition containing the names of 183 voters asking MEMA to assist in helping the town solve the dam problem. Bowen said he wanted to make sure MEMA was doing everything it could to assist in solving the problem.

McLeer said, "We are on the same page. We were not comfortable leaving the water level so low all summer and we do want to resolve the issue ... You as a group should be looking at alternatives. It is not likely the state will fix it."

"We are looking at eminent domain," Ray said.

Bowen said, "If he's not going to fix it, we are concerned that the fines will actually be there."

McLeer assured Bowen that the fines - \$500 a day - will be imposed to motivate Fortier to take action.