

## Measures approved to make dam safer

The mother of the boy who died said the changes are coming too late.

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PALMER — In the wake of a fatal accident at the upper dam in Bondsville, the Conservation Commission last night granted the property owner permission to clear shrubs to give police better visibility of the site.

Lawyer Daniel Beaudette, who is representing property owner Belchertown Land Trust, said fencing is also planned for the property to keep trespassers out.

But the mother of the 15-year-old boy who died said nothing will bring back her son and that the area should have been made safer before the accident occurred.

Ross W. Karnbach Jr. was swept into the turbulent waters of the Swift River while he attempted to cross the upper dam on June 29 with five friends. He died the next day.

"My son is gone," said an emotional Susan Karnbach.

She said the only warning that her son, Ross Karnbach Jr., had were signs saying "swim at your own risk."

"I want something done now!" Susan Karnbach shouted.

Beaudette said he is sorry about the tragedy, and that the trust is trying to ensure that another accident does not happen there again.

No trespassing signs went up last week, and the trust gave police permission to arrest trespassers on-site.

More signs will be posted, and Beaudette is looking into removing the 40-foot old wooden gate that teens and adults walk on to get to the dam. The commission told him that it supports the removal of the wooden gate, but that it is not the permitting authority, and directed him to contact the state Department of Environmental Protection.

"We don't want anyone else hurt out there," Beaudette told the commission.

While the spot has long been popular for swimming and fishing, it has a painful past.

In 1991, a 16-year-old drowned there, and several near drownings have occurred over the years. A day after Ross Karnbach's death, three teens were pulled out of the water. Like Ross Karnbach, they fell in while trying to cross the dam that links south Belchertown and Bondsville.

Belchertown Land Trust took the property over from the Endelson family earlier this year. Beaudette said the trust also discussed knocking the dam down, but said he doesn't think there would be public support for that. Removing the dam could also affect nearby properties, officials said.

The water level is high due to recent rainstorms, and Beaudette again warned that people should stay away from the dam.