

Groundwater clean-up gets hearing at OCC

By Penny Wright
Special writer

Have you tried a trichloro-fluoromethane cocktail lately? How about a methylene chloride on-the-rocks?

A dichlorobenzene daquiri? Perhaps not. But chances are some of your neighbors across Michigan may be drinking such concoctions unknowingly.

About 50 percent of Michigan's population depends on groundwater from wells for drinking water. When concentrations of organic and inorganic pollutants such as trichloro-fluoromethane, methylene chloride, chromium, arsenic, PCB and others leach into natural aquifers, then private and public drinking water supplies are frequently affected.

In many instances, the only indicators of polluted wells have been unusual tastes and odors.

ONE FREQUENT contributor to groundwater pollution is the sanitary landfill.

In an effort to reduce the occurrences of landfill contamination, the Michigan Toxic Substance Control Commission (TSCC) launched a short-term (March to July) investigation of current rules for designing, constructing and operating solid and hazardous waste landfill sites.

The study, entitled "Michigan Solid and Hazardous Waste Landfill Design Components: Investigation and Recommendations," was released last week in Lansing. It will be the subject of three public hearings around the state this week.

One hearing will be at 7 p.m. Tuesday in 314 J Building of the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College. The campus is on Orchard Lake Road south of I-696 in Farmington Hills.

Copies may be obtained by calling the TSCC at (517) 873-1011. Written comments will be submitted to the TSCC at P.O. Box 30216, Lansing 48909. Deadline is July 27.

NINE SITES in southwestern Wayne County and 14 across Oakland have been identified as posing environmental hazards — though not necessarily to drinking water because this area relies on Great Lakes water.

The sites are included on the 1984 Michigan Environmental Contamination Priority List. They are candidates for federal "Superfund" cleanup grants.

Since its creation in 1979, the state TSCC has had responsibility to investigate all reports involving toxic substances. From the beginning, it has been inundated with citizen questions about the safety of closed, active and proposed landfills.

The current report, requested by Gov. James J. Blanchard, is an attempt to address the concerns.

It contains 63 specific recommendations for

changing the rules presently governing landfill construction and operations. It emphasizes lightening current landfill application processes, making stricter construction and monitoring requirements, and instituting perpetual monitoring and maintenance of landfills.

ESTIMATED COST increases due to rule changes could range from \$20,000 to \$40,000 an acre, depending on landfill type.

According to Dr. Larry Holcomb, chairman of the TSCC, such cost estimates are probably within 50 percent of the final priortag for legislative changes. In Holcomb's view, the cost to the individ-

and taxpayer would be minimal. "Will it cost as much as \$10 more a year? I doubt it," said Holcomb.

"Will it cost \$5 more per family a year? I doubt it."

Holcomb stresses that such rule changes were an attempt to force construction of greater wastes — not an attempt to force resources recovery, a much-discussed alternative to landfills.

Some waste industry professionals question whether the proposed rules would lead to a practical and safe means of disposing of hazardous materials. They see the proposed recommendations as an effort to price landfills out of existence.

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Funds for emissions take area 'off the hook'

By Tim Richard
Staff writer

Tri-county governmental and industrial leaders are breathing easier now that the state Legislature has appropriated money for a tailpipe emissions test.

"Immediately, we're off the hook," said John Amberger, executive director of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. By "the hook" he meant the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's threatened sanctions for Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties' polluted air.

Those sanctions could include a cutoff of federal highway aid (except for safety projects) and refusal of permits to allow industrial expansion.

THE DRAMATIC announcement that the Legislature approved \$1.5 million for the administrative machinery for vehicle admissions tests came just as the EPA was winding up the second of three public hearings last week in Oakland County.

David Kee, EPA regional official, said the hearings — a necessary prerequisite of sanctions — "took the hammer on the gun. But I guess I can put the gun away now."

Amberger said tests could start as early as three months from now or as late as 26 months. A moderate guess would be mid-1985 to early 1986, he said. It would take the state 12 months to test all vehicles.

The legislative money would pay for special licensing of garages performing emissions tests and training for test operators.

Vehicle owners would have to pay about \$10 to have their tailpipe emissions tested. Repairs could run up to \$50, it is widely estimated.

BUT JOHN Grubba, managing director of the Oakland County Road Commission, is still worried about EPA sanctions.

"EPA continues to hold sanctions over our heads until vehicle inspections are in place," Grubba said later in the week through a spokesman.

"Your assurances, Mr. Kee, that safety projects are exempt do not satisfy us — especially in light of your statement that all projects will be reviewed on a project-by-project basis," Grubba told the EPA official at the hearing.

"While this review takes place, the safety projects will be delayed, and certainly highway casualties will occur."

Grubba accused EPA of holding the public hostage through unsafe roads in order to achieve its "bureaucratic" clean-air aims. "The EPA will hide its gull behind words in the Federal Register (where rules are published), but the blood will flow on the highways just as surely as if the army had been loosed in the streets to slash with bayonets."

As an example, Grubba said intersection improvements reduced traffic accidents per year from 2,780 to 2,195 — or 585 accidents. These would translate into 2.66 fatalities and 320 injuries annually, he said.

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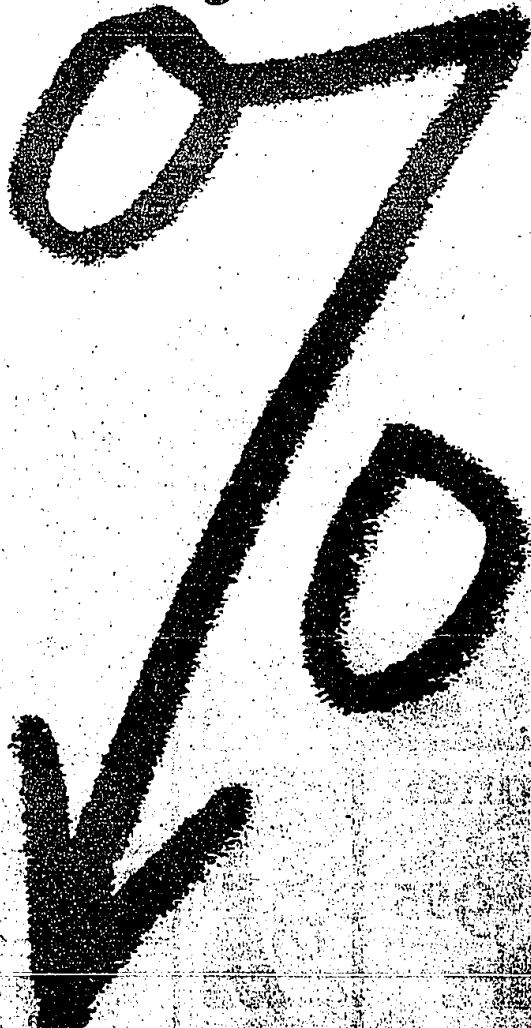
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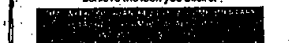
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