

State threatens development ban to get sewer OK

By Gary M. Cates
staff writer

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has threatened to cut off development in all Rouge River basin communities unless a sewer repair/expansion project is agreed to.

Notice of the threatened ban on sewer construction permits was sent by DNR May 2. Such a ban would halt all development in more than 70 affected communities.

Officials from western Wayne County communities, involved with the North Huron Valley/Rouge Valley Wastewater Control Project II (dubbed the Grandson of Supersewer), believe the notice is designed to force their involvement in that project.

IN ALL, the 70 communities range from as far north as Auburn Hills to as far south as Van Buren Township. Oakland County communities included: Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Township, Farmington, Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield Township, Southfield and Troy. Wayne County communities included: Canton Township, Garden City, Livonia, Plymouth, Plymouth Township, Redford Township and Westland.

The notice was contained in a letter from Roy Schrameck, supervisor of the DNR's compliance section, to the Wayne County DPW.

"You should be aware, for future planning purposes, that a temporary reduction or elimination of Act 98 sewer construction permits may be necessary to control such inputs as combined sewer overflows from collection systems operated within the service areas tributary to the Rouge Valley and the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department interceptor systems," Schrameck wrote.

"By copy of this letter we are also informing the individual communities within these service areas of this possibility."

SIMILAR LETTERS have been sent in the past, during planning of

sewer projects preceding the Grandson of Supersewer (NHV/RV II), according to Plymouth Township Attorney Brian James. But they never included such a wide range of communities.

"This is the third edition of this same letter, the message of which is to sign up for the NHV/RV II or face a community-wide sewer tap or extension ban," James said.

The NHV/RV II project is designed to solve pollution problems with the existing Rouge Valley sewer line, while increasing sewer capacity to western Wayne County.

THE \$110-MILLION-PLUS cost of the project is supposed to be funded through federal and local dollars. An earlier version of the project was turned over for 75 percent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funding because it wouldn't have solved the pollution problems.

A subsequent change in EPA funding guidelines, coupled with the ineligibility of portions of the project, caused the projected federal share of NHV/RV II will drop to about 50 percent — raising questions whether the local communities can afford their shares.

In the past, the DNR has used sewer ban threats to force communities to sign service agreements for proposed projects — agreements which commit the community to paying their share of the costs.

The service agreements are needed before the state can send a proposed project to the EPA for funding certification. James believes the NHV/RV II project is prepared for sending, and the state is getting set to ask communities to sign service agreements.

Human-like computer is OU research goal

Two Oakland University professors will get some help from the government in their search for a more human-like computer.

Linguistics professor Peter Blinkert and Christian Wagner, a professor in the School of Engineering and Computer Science, will move their research activities to Lowry Air Force Base for the summer.

At the Denver base, they will conduct an artificial intelligence workshop for the military and then do a final report and demonstration project.

Three top graduate students will go along to help with the project: Kathleen A. Malin of Plymouth, Thomas L. Schneek of Flint, and Frances M. Valley of Farmington Hills. Malin is a linguistics student while Schneek and Valley are in computer science.

THE PROGRAM is part of an Air Force move to stay abreast of developments in artificial intelligence research.

A competitive grant of \$40,000 includes transportation. There is also the prospect of additional funding from the U.S. Air Force at the end of the summer project.

The OU professors are working on a computer that will not only understand English commands but will be able to have an awareness of its own sensory, motor and reasoning capabilities.

Use of the computer to parse (analyze) English is not new, the researchers admit.

But the program is based on a new grammar designed by Blinkert and recently distributed through Mouton Publishers.

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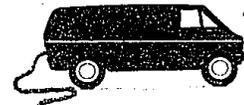
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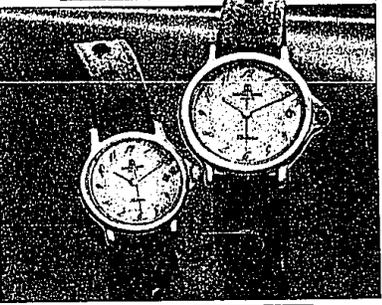
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