

Is it a

bird...

...is it a plane, is it Superman? No, it's the great Easter Sunday marshmallow drop, courtesy of the Oakland County Sheriff's department which dispatched a helicopter above the county courthouse to drop marshmallows to the small fry. Oh yes, the marshmallows were redemptible for little bags of candy. (Photo by Cynthia Abatt)



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Clean water is expensive until compared to roads

Cleaning up southeast Michigan's waters will be an expensive project — but not as expensive as highway construction.

A report from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) puts a \$4.6 billion price tag on the estimated capital costs of making waters here fishable and swimmable by the mid-1980s.

SEMCOG hired the consulting firm of Chase Modigliani, Inc. to prepare a report on "Economic and Financial Impacts of Pollution Control Alternatives."

A summary of the report was prepared by SEMCOG's Council on Environmental Strategy, chaired by Laghrup Village Mayor Richard N. Cogger. The summary compares costs of the highway and water quality programs.

THE U.S. Department of Transportation reported that in the decade of 1966-75, some \$180 billion was spent on highway construction in the nation (excluding maintenance and debt retirement), Cogger said.

The capital costs for sewers nationwide in the 20 years from 1975-95 are estimated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at \$150 billion, or \$30 billion less than the highways.

"Thus," said Cogger, "although the estimated costs for water pollution control represent a substantial program, it is a far second to highway construction as a public works program."

The seven-county southeast Michigan region "contains approximately 2.2 per cent of the nation's population (and) would require some 3.1 per cent of the total nationwide estimate," Cogger went on. "Since we are one of the country's most intensive industrial-commercial complexes, this ratio would not appear out of line."

So in a program costing \$150 billion nationwide, southeast Michigan's water program would cost \$4.5 billion, according to the SEMCOG consultant.

"That figure breaks down to \$3.1 billion for facilities and \$1.5 billion for stormwater control.

SEMCOG is the state-selected planning agent for a water quality management.

Such a planning process is required under terms of the 1972 Clean Water Act amendments. Sec. 208 of that act mandates attacking the problem of "non-point" pollution—the kind that comes from road runoffs, farmyards and the like.

"The major costs delineated would have to be spent whether there was a 208 Water Quality Management Plan or not," said Cogger's memò.

"However, the plan insures that preventive measures would be implemented and that non-point concerns are addressed."

For southeast Michigan, capital costs for the next 20 years are estimated at \$4.6 billion; operation and maintenance of facilities at \$1.7 billion; enforcement, administration, planning and review at \$1.4 billion — a total of \$6.5 billion.

How to report road potholes

"The public can help make our highways, roads and streets safer," said John L. Grubba, managing director of the Oakland County Road Commission.

"For example, when an immediate hazard on or along the roadway is noted, a call to our office of public assistance (858-4804) will help us respond to it. Most situations are taken care of as part of routine maintenance, but hazards can appear after our inspectors have passed.

"A chuckhole can erupt in the travelled portion of the roadway unexpectedly or something can fall off a vehicle onto the roadway anytime and anywhere. The public can help us and all motorists by giving prompt alert," said Grubba.

"Another way to help is to move disabled vehicles well off the travelled portion of the roadway. Traffic backed up and slowed down to avoid obstacles creates hazards to unsuspecting motorists far up the road."

GRUBBA SAID, "Unfortunately, cracks and holes occurring as pavements are worn out and traffic exceeds the standards of design when many roads were built years ago," said Grubba.

"Funds currently available fall far short of meeting the needs for reconstruction on our 2,459 miles of county

roads," he said. About half of that mileage (1,240 miles) is paved, but only 43 miles could be resurfaced in 1977 because of limited funds," he said.

THE ROAD COMMISSION is entirely dependent on federal, state and local units of government for increased funding. "Our basic source of funds is the state-collected and state-distributed taxes paid at the pump for gasoline and to the secretary of state for vehicle registrations.

"Other funds are contributed by the federal government, townships and the Oakland County Board of Commissioners for specific projects, as are property owners' special assessment funds for subdivision street improvements. The road commission does not levy taxes."

The county board has voted \$500,000 for road improvements this year, or enough to resurface about 15 miles of roadway. "Not all of that will be used for resurfacing, of course, because the county commissioners and locally elected officials who will be providing matching funds for projects have selected other types of work also," said Grubba, who noted that details are being finalized.



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