

Farmington warned about pollution

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there isn't anybody totally ignoring the situation."

The warnings were given last week as state officials placed a moratorium on new sewer construction in Grand Rapids because of similar polluted water problems. The city was ordered to build a \$15 million retention basin and other measures.

The new sewage system must be in place by Jan. 1, 1992; Grand Rapids officials estimate it will cost at least \$100 million and could as much

as double residential and business sewage rates.

STATE OFFICIALS have warned Farmington, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills and Beverly Hills and other cities they may face similar sanctions if pollution problems persist in their communities.

Though combined sewer systems have been in place for decades statewide, only recently have health advisories been posted for rivers and streams polluted with untreated sewage.

"This discharge of untreated sewage is a major health hazard, it's a threat to our multibillion-dollar tourist industry, and results in the destruction of our most precious natural resources," Attorney General Frank Kelley said.

David Hales, director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, said he sent out the warning letters to Farmington and other communities last week. "The purpose is to immediately reduce and eventually eliminate the discharge

of sewage to surface water in Michigan," Hales added.

OTHER COMMUNITIES may be ordered to comply with similar standards before their permits expire. If officials believe pollution problem warrant immediate action, Hales said. Kelley said he would take legal action against any community that violates the agreement.

"I'm not here to be mean-spirited," Kelley said, "but I can assure you, we are not going to be impressed by studies alone. It's going to

have to be bricks and mortar."

He anticipates 80 percent of the communities involved to voluntarily cooperate with the sanctions and expect the other 10 percent to land in court.

If the state environmental bond issue on the November ballot is approved, it would establish a loan fund to help communities correct their sewage systems, Hales added.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

More EPA control urged in Rouge cleanup

AP — As the state's Department of Natural Resources comes down hard on 65 communities for polluting the Rouge River with raw sewage, federal officials are criticizing the state for a lack of effort.

A congressional report released last week says cleaning the Rouge has proven too big a task for the DNR to undertake without increased federal supervision.

The report by the General Accounting Office, Congress' investigative agency, said the 474 known sources of pollution in the river have been ineffectively regulated.

The Michigan department "has not always taken enforcement actions to bring about compliance by these sources of pollution, and when taken, the actions were not always timely or effective in bringing about quick compliance," said the report, released Friday by U.S. Reps. John Dingell of Trenton and William Ford of Taylor, both Democrats.

The Rouge, which runs through the most populous region of southeastern Michigan, including the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills, "is considered a threat to the health and safety of Michigan citizens who live in its proximity, as well as a threat to the environmental integrity of Lake Erie," the report said.

THE STATE has undertaken an ambitious program to clean up the Rouge, but it has fallen short of bringing the river into compliance with federal standards. The DNR has failed to enforce provisions of existing combined sewer permits because the permit language is non-specific and "has frequently not taken enforcement actions for reporting violations, or taken them long after the violations occurred," the report said.

Also, when the department has sought to enforce the permits, "its actions were not always successful in bringing permittees into compliance."

"From what we can tell from the press release, it is consistent with what we've done the last two years on the Rouge," said Paul Zuger, DNR's director of surface water quality. "It has been a major effort

for the past couple of years. "We feel we're making strong progress in the very areas identified by the report," Zuger said.

THE GAO recommended the Environmental Protection Agency establish controls through its Chicago regional office to oversee the enforcement of discharge permits into the Rouge.

The EPA should review the DNR's progress in correcting its permit programs, the report said. If progress is unsatisfactory, the federal agency should develop remedies by consulting with the state, the report said.

In the past, the EPA has looked at Michigan's discharge-permit program statewide, rather than focusing on specific rivers, the report said.

Affected communities

The 65 communities, governmental units or sewer interceptors that have combined sewer systems face new state sanctions regarding overflows of raw sewage into waterways.

Following are some in and around the Observer & Eccentric area and the affected waterways:

- Beverly Hills, Rouge River
- Birmingham, Rouge River and Quanton Lake
- Bloomfield Hills, Rouge River
- Dearborn, Lower Rouge River
- Detroit, Detroit River/Rouge River
- Farmington, Upper Rouge River
- Grosse Pointe Farms, Lake St. Clair
- Grosse Pointe Park, Detroit River
- Grosse Pointe Shores, Lake St. Clair
- Farmington/Evergreen Interceptor, Rouge River

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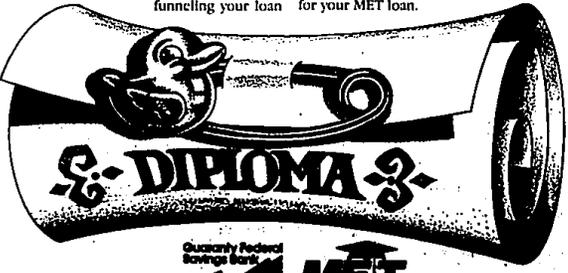
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