

Clean Water Act changes worry area residents

By SALLY TATO
STAFF WRITER

In the 1960s there were no live fish in the Clinton River from Pontiac to Lake St. Clair. Then came the Clean Water Act of 1972.

Now, according to Peggy Johnson of the Clinton River Watershed Council, fishery in the river is significantly restored and new parks and trails have been established along the riverfront, with people flocking to use them, she said.

"Cities which had turned their backs to the river are now re-turning to face the river," Johnson said.

And to keep things that way, some people living in the Clinton River Watershed basin want to stop lawmakers' efforts to change the Clean Water Act.

by the Clinton River Watershed Council in Rochester Hills, 30 or so residents from the basin area listened to and questioned seven representatives of environmental, business and the state on a U.S. House-passed amendment to the Clean Water Act.

That amendment loosens federal regulations on water quality programs within the Clean Water Act, such as the Great Lakes Initiative, according to Johnson.

The Great Lakes Initiative, Johnson told attendees, is a strategy adopted by governors in the Great Lakes states, that would control the amount of toxins entering the lakes. That would be accomplished by adopting uniform water quality standards.

However, the amendments make the Great Lakes Initiative no longer mandatory for the

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states to implement, Johnson said. "This could perpetuate the disadvantage to Michigan, which has higher standards... than other states," she said.

More important to residents who live in the watershed basin, though, is the possible effects of this bill on the Clinton River. Cities in the basin include: Rochester, Rochester Hills, Oxford Township, Orion Township, Mount Clemens, Warren, and portions of Birmingham.

"I think we should keep with the regulations we have because we're still seeing problems with

the water and we don't want to backtrack," said Julie Champlon, a Mount Clemens resident.

Residents of those cities question whether improvements will continue if the Clean Water Act is amended. "It's probably not good," said Jim Soudou of Rochester Hills. "The direction (the bill) is headed in is not good."

Residents at the meeting were also concerned about the handling of the sewage and storm waters and their effects on the pollution in the river.

Janet Blanche, owner of Bloomfield Realty, Inc., in Birmingham,

thinks that storm water run-off treatment should be separated from sewage water. "Very simply, when the sewers are combined, the retention treatment basins cannot retain and properly treat the water," Blanche said.

Birmingham's City Commission recently approved holding tanks for sewage, rather than separation, she said. "New cities have separation," she said. "It's the way to go, it's the technology of the present."

However, Tim Eder from the National Wildlife Federation told residents that rather than separating the two types of waters, a better solution would be to prevent rainwater from becoming polluted in the first place and then it would not need to be treated. Eder does not want the amendment to the Clean Water Act passed.

Gene Simms, a Birmingham resident, who also doesn't approve of the amended act, thinks that current programs already being implemented to handle stormwater run-off would become obsolete if the Clean Water Act passed.

"The state had a real good program in effect for some years and the proposals would affect that," he said. "Do we as citizens have the will and the desire to keep and improve our quality of life?"

There to discuss the U.S. House-approved bill were representatives from the Clinton River Watershed Council, the National Wildlife Federation, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Environmental Action Council, The Michigan Association of Realtors, Selective Companies, Inc. and the University of Detroit-Mercy Law School.

High bacteria levels keep beaches closed

With last week's temperatures in the high 90's, beach closings in Oakland County are causing swimmers to seek somewhere else to go.

Because of the high levels of E. Coli bacteria in the lakes, Orion Country Club Beach on Lake Orion in Orion Township, Azford Acres Beach on Doug Lake in Highland Township, Lakeland Improvement Association on Clear Lake in Oxford, Camp Nibelu Beach on Perry Lake in Brandon, and Camp Narrin Beach on Narrin Lake in Groveland are all closed as of last Wednesday. The beaches, whose concentrations of E. Coli bacteria were over 300 colonies per 100 milliliters of water (the maximum amount allowed for swimmers'

safety), will not reopen until the concentration levels have gone back down.

"Whatever is causing the levels of bacteria to be up will clear up when the water is diluted," said Barry Wyatt, environmental health supervisor for the Oakland County Health Division. "It's too bad we have to close the beaches when it's so hot, but we have to protect the public."

On a brighter note for Oakland County swimmers, Heather Lake Estates Beach on Heather Lake in Orion Township, Stoney Beach on Middle Straits Lake in West Bloomfield, Walled Lake City Beach on Walled Lake in Walled Lake and Holly Township Beach on Bush Lake in Holly have all been reopened for use.

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