

GRATIOT COUNTY

Alma set to test Pine this summer

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Everything is in place for Alma to start its own testing of the Pine River this summer, after tests by Alma College professors last year indicated that the river has large amounts of E-coli, Tetracycline and manure.

“The college test results were troublesome,” said Alma City Manager Phil Moore. “We need to be data driven; we’re testing on our own to see if we get the same results.”

Moore said the city is working with an aqua biologist to test five times over 30 days in three locations along the river.

If the tests indicate high levels of E. Coli, that first triggers a health department advisory, warning that the water way be unsafe.

“We’re following the Department of Environmental Equality protocol,” Moore said. That way, the results might trigger help from the DEQ as well. The city has a written testing plan, and they’ll submit each result to the DEQ.

Moore said that 25 percent of the city’s drinking water comes from the Pine. Combine that with the Gratiot Water Authority project partnership with St. Louis, and the Pine’s water quality is everyone’s concern.

“We’ll have water test results on the city’s website so everyone will be able to see them,” Moore said.

Moore said test results come back about 28

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hours after they're sent to the lab.

The city has been working with MSU Extension, the health department and the DEQ to develop a test that meets protocol after professors at Alma College presented findings from a study that

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found high level of E. coli and drug-resistant bacteria in the river, particularly downstream from CAFOs in Gratiot County.