Septic tanks, E. coli impact watershed

By Meghan Nelson
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SIDNEY — Swimming, boating and fishing might not be a typical conversation in late February, but it was exactly what local health officials were talking about Thursday during a seminar hosted by the Montcalm Planning Commission.

Bob Gouin, environmental health director, and Marcus Cheatham, health officer, both from the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) talked about the risk of E. coli, a bacteria commonly found in human waste, poses to swimming, boating and fishing activities in Montcalm County.

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Marcus Cheatham, health officer with the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, points out areas in the Flat River Watershed with high E. coli levels (in red) during a seminar hosted by the Montcalm Planning Commission on Thursday.
"The Flat River is one of 16 sites in Michigan that has been designated to "Setting the Condition". According to a presentation by the Mid-Michigan District Health Department during a seminar hosted by the Montcalm Planning Commission Thursday, the Flat River Watershed is in a poor state of health in comparison to similar watersheds in the Upper Peninsula.

Minimum ordinance: This solution would involve the health department and would allow officials to check houses when or after they're sold. Because the MMDHD covers three counties, Gratiot and Clinton are compliant with a county code. The MMDHD's files of septic tanks along with the MMDHD's soils need to be replaced can contact the Friends of the Flat River at the bigger picture of implementing a minimum ordinance.

Time of sale: This solution would require the MMDHD to certify home inspectors to inspect septic systems. Before a house sale could close, the septic system would need to pass an inspection and be compliant with county codes.

The MMDHD serves Montcalm, Clinton and Gratiot counties with implementing a minimum ordinance.