DEQ encourages reports of illegal dumping

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Recent discussion within the community has indicated that the general public may not be aware of the process to report illegal dumping. According to Molly Rippke, Aquatic Biologist Specialist, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the public is encouraged to report any dumping, illicit connections, and discharges to surface water. DEQ does not fine a person who reports illegal dumping, and reports can be completely anonymous.

The confusion may be related to a similar reporting system handled by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). The emergency hotline through MDARD is where reports of pesticide, fertilizer or manure spills can be reported.

Individuals with concerns about polluted runoff, excessive odor, or environmental issues associated with a specific farm may file a complaint for investigation with MDARD. MDARD investigates on-farm management of conditions, activities and/or materials relative to a set of science-based Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs).

According to Steve Mahoney, Acting Manager of the Michigan Right to Farm Program at MDARD, the Right to Farm Act states that the farmer and the complainant will both be notified of the results of the investigation. That is why MDARD does not take anonymous complaints through the Right to Farm program.

The complainant has the option to keep their complaint confidential until the claim is closed, at which time a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request would need to be filed in order to learn that person’s identity. MDARD’s 24-hour hotline should be used for reporting accidental agricultural pesticide, fertilizer and manure spills. Agriculture Pollution/Spills Hotline: 1-800-405-0101.

Residents are encouraged to report to the DEQ any dumping, illicit connections, and discharges to surface water through a form at https://miwaters.deq.state.mi.us/miwaters/ , or a phone call to Pollution Emergency Alert System (PEAS) at 800-292-4706. Reports to the DEQ can be completely anonymous.

When contacting either agency, it is important to note the date and time of the incident, the exact location, and as many details as possible. Time-stamped photographs are also helpful. Together the general public and the government agencies can work together to ensure clean water and environmental stewardship.