

GRATIOT COUNTY

IT'S GETTING HARDER TO WATCH THE PINE RIVER FLOW



LINDA GITTLEMAN — FOR THE MORNING SUN

It's only June and the Pine River at Leppien Park in St. Louis is already covered with nasty-looking vegetation.

By Linda Gittleman
For the Morning Sun

Walking on water apparently is for the birds.

Humans can't stroll across the Pine River in St. Louis, but birds can and do.

They can even perch in the middle of the river and rest

as they survey the vegetative growth that continues to spread on the river at Leppien Park.

Healthy Pine River Chairman Gary Rayburn told members that St. Louis residents were concerned about the contamination in Alma and its impact downstream.

From the looks of the river

downstream, it's not good.

That's why Alma College sophomore Mary Beth Kirk - an Alma native - will be testing the water in Alma and in St. Louis this summer.

She'll be working under the guidance of geology professor Murray Borrello and biology professor Tim Keeton.

She told the group Thursday that she would be using the established protocols and she's particularly interested in the quality of the river before and after a rain event.

She will also be looking at E-coli and antibiotic resistant contamination.

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The algae blooms and the

risks to the water once it goes over the dam are more areas of studies, as are water purity, temperatures, oxygen and Ph levels.

Algae, she noted, use up

the river's oxygen and the fish need it to live.

Her work will take her from Riverdale to the Mill Street Bridge in St. Louis.

For Kirk, her summer en-

terprise is personal.

"It does hit home," she said noting how she has seen the river change.

"It's just getting worse and worse," she said. "It's

my back yard too."

Borrello said Kirk's studies will allow them to match these results with previous studies.

"We don't know how

long bacteria lasts," he said. "This will allow us to track that."

A report on the results of the studies is expected in September.