

## **Table of Contents**

### **October News Articles**

---

- Page 2.      High Level Of Toxic Chemicals Detected Near Ithaca Landfill, *Gratiot County Herald*, September 12, 2018
- Page 4.      Alma College Research Into The Woes Of The Pine River Continues, *Gratiot County Herald*, September 20, 2018
- Page 5.      EPA Gives Update on Velsicol Plant Cleanup Process, *Morning Sun*, September 21, 2018
- Page 7.      Learn The Truth About Marijuana, *Daily News*, September 22, 2018
- Page 8.      Health Department Announces ACE Award Winner, *Lakeview Area News*, September 27, 2018
- Page 9.      EPA Provides Velsicol Cleanup Update, *Gratiot County Herald*, September 27, 2018
- Page 10.     Public Hearing Set For Septic System Regulations, *Gratiot County Herald*, September 27, 2018
- Page 11.     Lawmakers Seek To Regulate Septic Systems But Struggle For Funding, *Daily News*, October 1, 2018
- Page 12.     Do You Know Your HIV Status?, *Gratiot County Herald*, October 11, 2018
- Page 13.     Septic System Hearing Set For Monday, *Daily News*, October 11, 2018
- Page 14.     Company's Cleanup Targeting Pine River Substance, *Morning Sun*, October 15, 2018
- Page 16.     Citizens Express Opposition To Regulations, *Gratiot County Herald*, October 17, 2018
- Page 19.     Public Hearing On Septic System Program, *Lakeview Area News*, October 18, 2018
- Page 21.     Say No Recreational Marijuana Proposal, *Morning Sun*, October 18, 2018

# High Level of Toxic Chemicals Detected Near Ithaca Landfill

 Posted on Wednesday, September 12th, 2018 and is filed under [News](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0 feed](#). You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

## ***MDEQ to test residential drinking wells for substances***

**By Rosemary Horvath**

**Herald Staff Writer**

A high level of toxic chemicals has been traced to a monitoring well near the former Ithaca sanitary landfill in Newark Township.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality now hopes to test drinking wells at 20 area residences along Washington and South Alger roads.

Health Officer Marcus Cheatham, Mid-Michigan Department of Health, reported water sampling was scheduled to begin this week to test for Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, or PFAS.

“These toxic chemicals are like any other,” Cheatham said. “We can’t compel residents to allow the sampling. It is their choice to see if they want to participate or not.”

AECOM Engineering has been contracted to draw water samples. Cheatham said notices were mailed to residences but not all have responded as of last week.

PFAS are being discovered at various manufacturing sites across the state, including those associated with the Wolverine shoe manufacturer such as the one that closed decades ago in Ithaca.

The city landfill had been a depository for Wolverine tannery waste.

The Herald reported in the Aug. 9 edition MDEQ had targeted the former landfill site.

“We’re surmising leather scraps were dumped near where Well No. 4 was drilled and the water hasn’t moved,” Cheatham said. “Hopefully, water stayed atop the clay layer at No. 4.”

PFAS have been commonly used in various consumer products that are water-resistant, fire resistant and stain resistant such as fire-fighting foams, nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing and shoes, fast food wrappers, personal care products, and more.

MDEQ and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have been testing thousands of sites across the state.

Cheatham said all municipal water systems and school buildings are being tested from southern counties to the north.

Testing at all of the sites in Gratiot and Montcalm counties are completed.

DEQ drilled eight monitoring wells in early August at different distances encircling the former Ithaca landfill.

Cheatham said the MDEQ reported monitoring well No. 4 on the far east side of the landfill showed 7,300 parts per trillion.

The EPA has set a Lifetime Health Advisory level for PFAS of 70 ppt.

Cheatham reported that three of the eight wells were below the LHA with the lowest being 1.6. Five of the eight wells were above LHA with values mostly in the hundreds.

“DEQ is sampling the drinking water wells of 20 nearby residences to be sure the PFAS did not penetrate the clay and the drinking water is safe,” Cheatham reported.

He added that results are expected sometime in September or early October.

MDEQ did not penetrate the clay that was encountered at a depth of about 15 feet. Cheatham said clay was considered to serve as a protective layer for the deeper residential wells nearby.

"If PFAS levels above the LHA are found in the residences homeowners will be offered bottled water or filters so they will have safe drinking water," Cheatham said.

The city of Parchment in Kalamazoo County where high levels of PFAS registered in the drinking water reconnected to the city of Kalamazoo municipal system.

"We are only concerned about drinking water," Cheatham said. He reported that PFAS do not penetrate through the skin. "It is important to keep bathing and washing hands to stop the spread of contagious diseases."

# Gratiot County Herald

## Thursday, September 20, 2018

### ***Alma College research into the woes of the Pine River continues***

By Rosemary Horvath  
Herald Staff Writer

An Alma College research team that rails against concentrated animal feeding operations in Gratiot County would like to sample some of their manure.

Professors Murray Borrello and Tim Keeton have ongoing student research groups collecting water samples from the Pine River.

Over the summer, students took water samples at six different locations.

Borrello says the next step is to identify any bacteria and analyze the data. "There's meat to it but still needs more work to be done," he said.

They presented results from the summer project last week at the Healthy Pine River meeting held at the Alma Public Library.

The HPR group donated \$7,400 to Alma College, a portion of which funded stipends so the students could carry out the water sampling over summer.

Research will continue as part of the curriculum during this school year.

The next step is to analyze the DNA collected with actual DNA from human and animal fecal matter to determine sources and percentages.

Keeton wants samples of dairy and beef cattle to create bovine controls.

It may be possible to target where the bacteria originate based on the location of the sample taken.

Keeton remarked most farm operators follow Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices, which are designed to offer nuisance protection for farmers and best management practices for environmental stewardship. GAAMPs are updated annually.

"There is reason to think regulations here (in Gratiot County) should be different," Keeton said, due to flat land and tile drains under farm fields carrying away excess rainwater.

At the same time, however, along with the moisture is liquid manure fertilizer draining off into ditches and waterways.

A paper circulated at the meeting entitled "What's Wrong With Our River?" and subtitled *A Guide To Water Quality Issues in the Pine River and Rural Areas* claimed that "agricultural runoff is the No. 1 cause of water pollution in the U.S."

As for the Pine River, the paper recognizes two main types of pollution: Industrial, downstream of the Alma Dam, while upstream of the dam, algae blooms, low oxygen and high concentrations of E. coli bacteria.

"We are confident that agricultural runoff, mostly from manure application and livestock facilities are the main sources of the algae blooms and bacteria we find in the Pine River..." the paper states. It went on to point out the association between the algae blooms and the county's CAFOs and "heavy manure application."

To be certain, the research team needs fecal samples from cows to apply a DNA fecal source tracking method.

Keeton talked about several different DNA methods and said that "many of the probes have been shown not to be good."

This year, the HPR expected to learn the human versus bovine percentages from Pine River water samples collected by Michigan Department of Environmental Quality re-

searchers.

These 2017 MDEQ water samples were collected at locations different from those of the college sites.

The outcome produced some false negatives from the DNA fecal source tracking method used at Saginaw State University lab. After several different attempts, the samples were sent to a lab at Michigan State University that, consequently, and those findings have not yet been reported.

MDEQ Aquatic Biologist Specialist Molly Rippke replied in an email to the Herald Friday that "A false negative is where a negative test result is wrong. In other words, you get a negative test result, but you should have got a positive test result. In PCR this is common because we are looking at DNA and matching it to a known standard and any number of things can make this happen, including other substances in the sample, decomposition, dilution, and the presence of other types of DNA, even algae."

The college project ought to determine causes of algal blooms downstream from the Alma dam to St. Louis.

The nitrogen and phosphorous found upstream of the dam wash downstream promoting the proliferation of aquatic plants in the river, Borrello noted.

Around a decade ago the EPA paid to dredge Horse Creek of petroleum waste dumped into it from the former Alma refinery. Today, Horse Creek, which hugs the shoreline of the privately owned Evergreen Village Park in St. Louis, is packed with green slime and green vegetation.

Borrello said there have been high levels of algae found in Horse Creek which causes stagnant water.

The park has 183 sites, according to the owner website MHVillage, and all have sewer pipes draining to a pump on Michigan Avenue that carries the sewage to the St. Louis sewer treatment plant.

Whether any of the older premises have corroded sewer pipes leaking into the river has yet to be investigated.

On a separate note, Mid Michigan District Health Department Health Officer Marcus Cheatham announced at the HPR meeting that the Gratiot County Board of Commissioners was expected to take action on a proposed septic system ordinance at their Sept. 18 meeting.

If Clinton and Montcalm county boards follow suit, and after public hearings, the health district would be able to issue a discharge permit when a new home is built.

A good permit would be valid for 10 years.

After that time, a reminder is mailed for a permit renewal. This carries a slight fee to the health department and the cost of hiring an inspector.

An investigation over summer has shown a high number of residences in some areas of the county either have faulty septic systems or no systems at all that contribute to human waste being discharged into the groundwater and waterways.

This too has been determined as a key source of E. coli bacteria in the Pine River.

A video explaining the proposed ordinance is available on the health department website.

**ST. LOUIS**

# EPA gives update on Velsicol plant cleanup process

---

**By Sean Bradley**

*sbradley@digitalfirstmedia.com  
@MorningSunSean on Twitter*

---

More than 50,000 pounds of contaminants have been recovered in the contaminated, 1-acre area being cleaned up at the former Velsicol Chemical plant in St. Louis.

The treatment system is scheduled to run at least until Oct. 18, as reported by Diane Russell, Community Involvement Coordinator with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, on Wednesday.

"Prior to that date, EPA and (Michigan Department of Environmental Quality) will evaluate the contamination amounts recovered and determine if it is appropriate to shut down the thermal treatment system. Before initiating the shutdown, EPA and MDEQ will do soil sampling in the heated area," Russell said.

Thermal treatment vendor TerraTherm continues to add citric acid and peracetic acid into the water treatment system to reduce biological growth and prevent the formation of calcium carbonate, she said. The forma-

**CLEANUP » PAGE 2**

# Cleanup

FROM PAGE 1

tion of calcium carbonate was producing a white discharge.

The peracetic acid has also reduced the biological odor from the discharge.

Since the start of thermal treatment in March, the amount of contaminant mass being recovered has decreased.

The estimated amount of electricity usage has exceeded the EPA's initial estimate of 7 million kilowatt hours of electricity, instead using approximately 8 mil-

lion kilowatt hours with at least five weeks of heating remaining.

Bids are being evaluated for the in-place heating of the second, 3-acre area on the former Velsicol chemical plant site in St. Louis.

Installation of the heating units could begin this fall and heating of the area

could begin next spring or summer, according to Russell.

The EPA and DEQ have signed a State Superfund Contract that commits the DEQ to pay 10 percent of the in-situ thermal treatment of the second area. The contract is required before any work can begin.

Work is being finished on a design for the required preparation for the in-place thermal treatment.

Treatment will likely not take place until 2021 since not enough electricity can be provided at the same time as the second area and burn pit treatments. In

addition, the EPA is moving forward on the design for the hookup to municipal water for 11 homes near the burn pit.

Access agreements are being received by the EPA from some of the homeowners agreeing to be provided municipal water provided by St. Louis.

# The Daily News

## Saturday, September 22, 2018

# Learn the truth about marijuana

Submitted by the Mid-Michigan District Health Department

What do Colorado, Washington, Alaska, Oregon and Washington, D.C., all have in common? Several years ago they all legalized recreational marijuana.

Michigan now has the opportunity to learn how legalization has affected those states so that we can make better decisions.

Hopefully, most people agree that kids and teens need protection from marijuana. The parts of the brain involved in addiction are not fully formed until a person is in their early-to mid-20s. In other words, younger brains are more susceptible to addiction. At least one in six adolescents and one in 11 adults who use marijuana will become addicted.

When it comes to accessibility, most young people in states with legalized marijuana say it is “very easy” for them to get. States with legalized marijuana are seeing an increase in use by youth and teens. In areas with legalization, the number of teens who have used marijuana in the past month has continued to rise more than any other area in the United States.

Colorado has the highest number of

youth admitting to trying marijuana for the first time, which has increased 65 percent since marijuana was legalized. Even as the use of cigarettes, alcohol, and all other drugs combined has declined, more high school seniors in Colorado are using marijuana than they were a decade ago.

Marijuana use by our youth will have lifelong harm. Teens who use marijuana at least once a week are more likely to have problems with their learning, memory, math skills, and reading skills. They are also less likely to graduate from high school. Further, teens and young adults who use marijuana are more likely to have serious mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, psychosis, and schizophrenia.

Data also tells us that teens who use marijuana are more likely to go on to use other drugs, such as heroin and cocaine, and the younger they are when they first use marijuana, the more likely they are to use other drugs.

Marijuana has become a very difficult and confusing topic. Opinion and fact can be hard to separate. For an excellent nonbiased, nonpartisan review of both sides of the argument, given by nonprofit professional researchers, see [www.procon.org](http://www.procon.org).

# Lakeview Area News

## Thursday, September 27, 2018

### Health Department Announces ACE Award Winner



The Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) is pleased to announce that Leslie Kinnee, Public Information Officer, was chosen by her peers to receive the ACE (Achievement, Character, Excellence) Award for the period July through September 2018.

ACE Award recipients are chosen by their colleagues and have proven to demonstrate achievement, character and excellence in all they do at MMDHD.

Kinnee's co-workers describe her as someone who gives all she can to the agency, with unwavering dedication. She remains positive despite a heavy work load and is willing to

assist others whenever asked. She is a great co-worker and very much appreciated.

Pictured: Marcus Cheatham, Health Officer, presents appreciated Leslie Kinnee, Public Information Officer, with the ACE Award. Mid-Michigan District Health Department thanks Kinnee for her dedicated service to public health and congratulates her on winning the ACE Award.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

# **Gratiot County Herald**

## **Thursday, September 27, 2018**

### **EPA PROVIDES VELSICOL CLEANUP UPDATE**

#### **Velsicol Chemical In-place Thermal Treatment System for Area 1**

The in-place thermal treatment system continues to heat the 1-acre area and the average soil temperature is approximately 103 degrees Celsius (217 degrees Fahrenheit). The treatment system is scheduled to run at least until Oct. 18, 2018. Prior to that date, EPA and MDEQ will evaluate the contamination amounts recovered and determine if it is appropriate to shut down the thermal treatment system. Before initiating the shutdown, EPA and MDEQ will do soil sampling in the heated area.

The thermal treatment vendor (TerraTherm) continues to add citric acid and peracetic acid into

the water treatment system to reduce biological growth and prevent the formation of calcium carbonate. The formation of calcium carbonate was producing a white discharge. The peracetic acid has also reduced the biological odor from the discharge.

To date, over 50,000 pounds of contaminants have been recovered. Since the start of thermal treatment, the amount of contaminant mass being recovered has decreased. The estimated amount of electricity usage has exceeded our initial estimate. It was estimated we would use 7.75 million kilowatt hours of electricity, but we are currently at about 8 million kilowatt hours with at least five weeks of heating remaining.

#### **Velsicol Chemical In-place Thermal Treatment System for Area 2**

EPA is currently evaluating bids for the in-place heating of the second 3-acre area on the former chemical plant site. Installation of the heating units could begin this fall and heating of the 3-acre area could begin next spring/summer. EPA and MDEQ have signed the State Superfund Contract that commits the MDEQ to pay 10 percent of the in-situ thermal treatment of Area 2 (required before any work can begin).

#### **Pine River Investigation Downstream of the St. Louis Dam**

EPA expects to receive the results of the second-year ecological study by Michigan State University prior to Thanksgiving. EPA is also developing a sampling plan for the banks of the Pine River downstream of the St. Louis Dam and upstream of the high school football field.

#### **Velsicol Burn Pit**

EPA is currently finishing the design for the work required in preparing the area for the in-place thermal treatment. Treatment will likely not take place until 2021 since not enough electricity can be provided at the same time as the Area 2 and Burn Pit treatments. EPA is also moving forward on the design for the hookup of 11 homes near the Burn Pit to municipal water. EPA is beginning to receive access agreements from some of the homeowners agreeing to be provided municipal water provided by the city of St. Louis.

# Gratiot County Herald

## Thursday, September 27, 2018

## ***Public Hearing Set for Septic System Regulations***

**By Rosemary Horvath**  
**Herald Staff Writer**

A public hearing is set for Oct. 15 to hear support and opposition to a proposed section of environmental health regulations governing septic systems in Gratiot, Montcalm and Clinton counties.

The hearing, conducted by the Board of Health, begins at 6 p.m. Location is the Ithaca office of the Mid Michigan District Health Department, 151 Commerce Drive.

Gratiot County Board of Commissioners at their meeting Sept. 18 approved the language which boards from the other two counties will decide to do prior to the public hearing.

Chairman George Bailey explained the board action only addresses the language.

The health district's Board of Health of which he is a member will hear public comments before it considers approval.

Then the proposal returns to the individual county boards for final approval.

Commissioner Sam Smith moved to approve the language which was seconded by Commissioner Tim Lambrecht. The motion passed 3 to 2 with opposition from Commissioners Rusty Bongard and Jan Bunting.

Bunting explained later as a former owner of a pizza shop she tired of having to meet so many health department regulations, some of which seemed unnecessary.

County resident Craig Cooper during public comment who said he has a "long career" putting in septic systems said he opposed "government regulations." He said, "leave the downstream side of drains alone," and he expressed a belief "everyone will be forced to hook into municipal water systems" by the bureaucrats one day.

A link to the proposed language is on the main page of the district health department website as is a link to the comprehensive study Failing Septic Systems in Mid-Michigan: An Unseen Threat to Public Health, comprehensive study that led to the

new language.

Health Officer Marcus Cheatham told the Herald recently that the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development has funding to help property owners repair or replace their faulty septic systems.

Financial assistance also could come through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority's Property Improvement Loan Program.

"New home construction already requires a permit from the health department," he said, but it is systems decades old or properties where there

is no system at all that has shown to contaminate the groundwater and water bodies like the Pine River.

"The new ordinance would require a check of the septic tank every 10 years," he said.

He explains the process in a video on the district health department's YouTube channel.

One misconception has been the new language would require a septic system inspection before a property is sold. This standard is included in new rules passed recently by Isabella County.

"People don't support time of

sale," Cheatham said. "Isabella County's ordinance only affects homes being bought and sold. Other homes not on the market aren't checked for leaking systems. They can sit there for 20 years and never get checked."

So, the proposal for the three district health counts requires an inspection once every decade. Cheatham said, "We always hear from people who bought a house and learned the septic system is deficient. They say 'can't you do something?' We could if we had an ordinance."

Michigan -- the Great Lakes State -- is the only state in the union without mandatory septic system inspections.

Human bacteria produces E.coli bacteria that can make persons ill.

A septic tank which separates the solids and liquids could have cracks in the concrete causing sludge to leak. The sludge that collects at the bottom of the tank should be pumped out periodically by a licensed septage hauler.

Cheatham said inspectors find where a septic tank discharges waste into.

# The Daily News

## Monday, October 1, 2018

# Lawmakers seek to regulate septic systems but struggle for funding

JEREMY WAHR | Capital News Service

A pair of bills that would require the inspection and possible replacement of private septic tanks to improve the safety of drinking water faces an uphill battle.

They would establish statewide standards to prevent faulty septic systems from contaminating drinking water. They were introduced by Reps. Abdullah Hammoud, D-Dearborn, and James Lower, R-Cedar Lake.

Michigan is the only state without uniform standards for the systems that are used primarily by rural residents who do not have access to sewers, advocates say.

"Numerous researchers have pointed out the need for reform, noting that our lakes and streams are contaminated, and this has directly been linked to leaking septic systems," Joseph Sullivan, an aide to Hammoud, wrote in an email.

But some groups are concerned with how the bills would affect poor people. They question how the inspections and septic upgrades would be funded.

"The effects would be protecting groundwater and the environment, which is great for public health," Meghan Swain, execu-

tive director for the Lansing-based Michigan Association for Local Public Health, wrote in an email. "But how we get there is a different story. There is concern that grandma won't be able to afford a replacement system. So, who pays for it then?"

The proposal's drawbacks are financial, said Swain, whose group opposes it.

"One main reason is that it doesn't come with any money," she said. "We support the spirit of the legislation and believe in septic inspections, but not as these bills present."

The plan is to work with nonprofit organizations, the federal government and other organizations to find funds to help owners fix defective systems, Sullivan said.

The Michigan Association of Counties has not taken an official position on the bills, said Deena Bosworth, director of governmental affairs for that group. But some counties oppose the bills because they would do away with pre-sale inspections of private septic systems.

These local point-of-sale ordinances require sewer inspections before selling a home.

"The bills prohibited point-of-sale ordi-

nances, which counties adopted and used to inspect septic systems at the point-of-sale," Bosworth said. "The bill said they couldn't have these anymore, and prohibited the local units of government from being able to enforce that ordinance."

Other counties have financial concerns.

"The data (collection) and the routine inspections would have put a significant burden on local public health departments," Bosworth said.

The bills face several hurdles, including finding out how many Michiganders have septic systems. The state doesn't track that, Sullivan said.

"We would also be working with local health departments to establish standards compliant with the statewide standards and their communities," Sullivan said. "Before any of this can happen, the legislation would have to pass."

The bills were referred to the House Committee on Natural Resource last spring, and behind-the-scenes revisions are being made, Sullivan said.

Both Sullivan and Bosworth said that without clear funding, the bills may not be approved by the committee.

# Gratiot County Herald

Thursday, October 11, 2018

**DO YOU KNOW YOUR  
HIV STATUS?**

**TAKE THE TEST AND TAKE CONTROL!**

*If you are at-risk, get tested! The sooner the diagnosis is made, the less likely you are to pass HIV on to others and the longer you are likely to live.*

Mid-Michigan District Health Department offers anonymous and confidential testing with results available the same day.  
Call for more information or to make an appointment  
**989-227-3111**



# The Daily News

## Thursday, October 11, 2018

### Septic system hearing set for Monday

Proposed ordinance affects Montcalm,

Clinton and  
Gratiot counties

ELISABETH WALDON  
[ewaldon@staffordgroup.com](mailto:ewaldon@staffordgroup.com)

ITHACA — The public will have the chance to give input next week on a proposed septic system ordinance for Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties.

A public hearing to discuss the proposed ordinance will be 6 p.m. Monday in conference rooms A and B of the Gratiot County Branch Office at 151 Commerce Drive in Ithaca.

The public hearing will be hosted by the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD), which has proposed updating its sanitary code for the three-county area to require a discharge permit for all developed properties — residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial structures — with wastewater plumbing that is not connected to a municipal or community sewer system regulated by the state.

The proposal would also require all septic systems to be inspected every 10 years. All new construction projects would receive a free discharge permit good for 10 years, at the end of which time the permit would have to be renewed along with an inspection and fee.

Health department officials have been working with officials in the three-county area since 2012 on collaborative water quality outreach efforts after human sewage and E. coli was discovered in local rivers — including the Looking Glass River and



Marcus  
Cheatham

Continued from Page 1

Maple River in Clinton County, the Maple River and Pine River in Gratiot County and the Flat River and Maple River in Montcalm County.

The three-county area has about 40,000 septic systems (not including municipal water systems) and health department officials have the goal of inspecting 4,000 of those per year if the proposed ordinance is approved by Boards of Commissioners in all three counties.

During Tuesday's Montcalm County Economic Development & Physical Resources Committee meeting, commissioners voted to recommend the full board vote on whether to accept the proposed ordinance during the board's Nov. 13 meeting. The full board will also meet at 6 p.m. Oct. 22 prior to the Nov. 13 full board meeting.

Commissioners also asked MMDHD Health Officer Marcus Cheatham whether a more local public hearing can be scheduled for Montcalm County residents who aren't able to attend Monday's public hearing in Gratiot County.

"The part that concerns me a little bit is that the public hearing is in another county," Commissioner Patrick Q. Carr said. "Would there be any chance of hosting more

than one of those prior to us voting on that? Could we have a public hearing in Montcalm County? I'm just afraid we're going to get a little pushback."

Cheatham said a local hearing can definitely be arranged to take place before commissioners vote on the ordinance in November.

Cheatham said health department officials currently don't have the authority to go onto properties and inspect septic systems unless they receive a formal complaint from a neighbor of a problematic property.

"Some of those folks — and they know who they are — they need to be reminded that they need to put a septic system in," he said. "We understand people's issues and we're good at helping them find resources and keeping them on the right side of the law while they figure things out. A lot of the time, it's pumping. But a lot of times people don't complain, they don't rat out their neighbors. This is the problem, we can't do anything about folks when they don't complain about each other."

Audience member Mary Cooley of Crystal questioned the financial impact of the proposed ordinance.

"My concern would be how this is going to affect lower-income communities if all of a sudden the health department comes in

and does a mass sweep and all of a sudden you have a lot of people who cannot afford to be in compliance," she said.

Cheatham said financial assistance will be available, such as the Michigan State Housing Development Authority Property Improvement Loan Program.

Rep. Jim Lower, R-Cedar Lake, introduced House Bills 5752 and 5753 last March to improve inspection and maintenance of septic systems. Under current state law, Michigan doesn't define the malfunction or failure of an onsite wastewater treatment system, and the proposal would establish specific standards. Lower's bill has stalled since March in the State House Committee on Natural Resources.

"I was talking with our representative (Jim Lower) on Saturday and he tells me they expect to deal with it in the lame duck session," Commissioner John Johansen told his colleagues and the audience during Tuesday's meeting. "This issue is a real issue."

For more information about the health department's proposed ordinance, visit [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org) or watch a video presentation at [youtu.be/n-M1\\_EHquuE](https://youtu.be/n-M1_EHquuE) online.

Cheatham is also available to answer questions from the public via phone at (989) 287-0701 or via email at [mcheatham@mmdhd.org](mailto:mcheatham@mmdhd.org).

Continues on Page 2

### Septic system ordinance hearing

GRATIOT COUNTY

# Company's cleanup targeting Pine River substance

By Greg Nelson

[gnelson@digitalfirstmedia.com](mailto:gnelson@digitalfirstmedia.com)

Cleanup of the polluted former Velsicol Chemical Co. plant site in St. Louis is progressing on schedule.

The first portion of in-place thermal treatment, on a portion of the 52-acre parcel known as Area 1, began in March and is due to be wrapped up by Oct. 18, according to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Community Involvement Coordinator Diana Russell.

"Prior to that date EPA and (the

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality) will evaluate the contamination amounts recovered and determine if it is appropriate to shut down the thermal treatment system," she said. "Before initiating shutdown, EPA and MDEQ will do soil sampling in the heated area."

Recently members of the Pine River Superfund Citizens Task Force were concerned about a white, chalky-like substance being discharged into the adjacent Pine River from the site.

However, that problem is being taken care of by adding chemicals

to the water treatment system to reduce biological growth and prevent the formation of calcium carbonate, which was producing the white discharge.

"The discharge into the Pine River is now being treated with citric acid, which serves as a water softener to clean up the chalkiness, and peracetic acid, which kills the bacteria," Task Force Secretary Jane Keon said. "Two gallons of peracetic per day is being used and citric acid additions are ongoing. Daily inspection at the discharge pipe are being con-

SUBSTANCE » PAGE 2



JANE KEON — SPECIAL TO THE MORNING SUN

Brown and green algae spreads near where the Honeyoey Creek empties into the Pine River in Alma on April 19.

# Substance

FROM PAGE 1

ducted."

During the process the ground has been heated to a temperature of 217 degrees Fahrenheit using more than 8,000,000 kilowatt hours of electricity at a cost of about \$125,000 a week. The amount of electricity used is already more than expected.

In addition, 20,000,000 gallons of treated water has been discharged into the river and more than 52,000 pounds of contaminants have been recovered in the non-aqueous phase

liquid (NAPL) area.

Among those were chlorobenzene, tuolene and DPCP.

The NAPL is trucked to Arkansas where it is incinerated.

According to the EPA, about 80 pounds of DDT were leaking into the river from the plant site prior to the treatment.

A similar in-place thermal treatment process will also take place on a three-acre parcel called Area 2.

Heating units could begin getting installed yet this fall, Russell said. Work is due to start next spring or summer. The EPA has already been approved funding.

# Citizens Express Opposition to Regulations

 Posted on Wednesday, October 17th, 2018 and is filed under [FEATURE](#), [News](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.



The Mid Michigan District Health Department on Monday night held a public hearing to seek input regarding proposed required inspections of septic systems. Picture are Board of Health members, from the left: Montcalm County Commissioner Betty Kellenberger, Clinton County Commissioner Dwight Washington, Montcalm County Commissioner Tom Lindeman, Gratiot County Commission Chairman George Bailey and Clinton Commissioner Bruce DeLong. Gratiot Commissioner Sam Smith was absent.  
 (Herald Photo – Horvath)

## ***Public hearing regarding septic system oversight draws large crowd***

**By Rosemary Horvath  
Herald Staff Writer**

Faced with the likelihood of hefty bills for repairing or replacing septic tanks and drain fields, a majority of landowners Monday night at a public hearing leveled antagonism at the Mid Michigan District Health Department for raising the possibility of requiring inspections of an occupied dwelling's septic system.

Landowners from the health district's three counties — Gratiot, Montcalm, Clinton — packed a meeting room and flowed into a hallway at the MMDHD Ithaca office.

The MMDHD Board of Health, composed of two commissioners from each county, conducted the hearing to field comments.

Health Officer Marcus Cheatham maintained a positive outlook in spite of the backlash.

In an email follow-up, he replied he thought the hearing went well, the discussion informative "and most people were very respectful. Many of



Landowners from the health district's three counties — Gratiot, Montcalm, Clinton — packed a meeting room and flowed into a hallway at the MMDHD Ithaca office on Monday, Oct. 15.

the concerns expressed were valid and were actually things that bother us too, and we've tried to address them and we will keep working on them."

A plan to address a major source of water pollution has been discussed for several years.

The health department organized a 13-member Mid-Michigan Water Quality Management Committee that brought together officials representing government, agriculture, drain offices and realtors. They met with staff members of the health department and regional conservation districts. Guided by project facilitators from the Lansing firm Public Sector

Consultants, their analysis culminated in a report titled Failing Septic Systems in Mid-Michigan: An Unseen Threat to Public Health was released last April and distributed at the meeting.

A key factor in the report established that all three watersheds showed high levels of human sewage.

During the Monday hearing, Cheatham stressed environmental regulations for sewage disposal currently exist, and that permits are required and building site criteria are in place.

“But there are two big holes in our septic ordinance,” he said.

Life expectancy of a septic system if well-maintained and the tank emptied is about 30 years.

A proposed amendment would strengthen regulations by requiring an inspection every 10 years to ensure the sewage disposal system operates as designed and that it prevents sewage from entering the watersheds.

Health officials are concerned with systems “in the state of failure.”

However, this defense won few supporters.

One person questioned the expertise of those determining a system’s failure.

Lee Aldrich, of Pine River Township, called the entire proposal “ill-conceived.”

Craig Hooper, of North Star Township, claimed state government intended “to take away our freedom” and that this one step would lead to a mandate to hook into a municipal sewage collection system.

A farmer demanded that owners of old farmhouses in rural areas should be grandfathered in, thus allowing household sewage to drain into drain tiles. And that septic requirements should only be required at the time a property sold.

Another person challenged the costs involved and asked for state assistance. Cheatham said there are programs available that offer grants and loans or both to hold a household cover the cost.

MMDHD Director of Environmental Health Liz Braddock explained inspectors will be licensed and chosen by the homeowner although they will be approved by the department. Inspectors will be from the private sector and not the health department so the price range for the work will vary. An inspector will be authorized to fill out a permit form to forward to the health department.

Cheatham said the department is not currently or plans to be in the future entangled in [court](#) battles over septic systems. “You can pump out (a tank) and stay in a house for a long time,” he said. “We work with (homeowners). We only care if (a septic system) is in a failure state. We are not the bad health department.”

Laura Campbell of Michigan [Farm](#) Bureau wanted a timeline for enforcement. Braddock said timeline to have a tank pumped is 14 to 30 days.

She and Cheatham both implied there is some leeway as long as residents are engaged with the health department.

There were questions about engineering. Dan Rossman, a former MSU Extension educator, asked if different technology would be accepted. He noted that every site has different soil types and topography, so “is there room for creativity and working with different options?” he asked.

According to Braddock, A mound system only works on a small lot. She explained a special committee at the health department evaluates new technology and selects ideal options for small parcels.

Households in Amish communities are eligible for special variances, mainly

because of their low water flows.

She also noted that the code requiring a certain size of drainage field and tank is based on bedroom size of a house rather than occupancy.

Following several hours of discussion, the Board of Health took no action.

Cheatham indicated fine-tuning the proposed amendment will be an ongoing process. Individual county commissioners will have their own discussions.

Montcalm County, for example, has a discussion planned for November at a regular board meeting.

Gratiot County board chairman George Bailey said after the meeting he recognized there is pushback when the status quo is threatened. While blame is thrown around and different opinions expressed, very few people disagree a problem exists, he said.

The bottom line is “our waterways are dangerously polluted and we need to fix the problem we always can’t wait for the federal government to fix it.”

He agreed the discussion Monday was helpful and the subject will be discussed in the future.

A link to the report and more information about the proposed amendment is available on the Mid Michigan District Health Department website.

# Lakeview Area News

## Thursday, October 18, 2018

### Public Hearing on Septic System Problem



Mike Reeves and Mary Corley listening to the Septic System Discussion

By Joe Tilton

Two health-services issues were topics of separate committee meetings of the Montcalm County Board of Commissioners Tuesday morning in Stanton.

Economic Development and Physical Resources opened a discussion led by the Chairman John Johansen, regarding a proposed ordinance governing septic systems in the county. While the issue is regional, multiple counties had formed a committee, made of commissioners from each county, to study the reasons for elevated levels of E Coli bacteria in lakes and streams, most notably Flat River that runs

through Greenville.

After five-years of study, the answers to; why is human waste showing up in water and what can be done about it? are about to be answered.

Marcus Cheatham, Director of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department told the committee that the problem appears to be septic systems that are never serviced following construction. "Before 1966 there were no regulations required. Now, we have a serious problem." Cheatham continued saying, "We do not want to interfere with property sales so we are looking at what else can be done."

The answer appears to be "discharge permits."

These permits will be good for 10-years and they are easy to comply with. His department is encouraging septic systems be pumped to alleviate the problem, particularly systems near lake and streams.

Cheatham told the committee that 10 to 15-percent of the county's homes have failed systems or no system at all. With correction efforts, financing is called to question. "Financial Program Systems are available and the Department of Environmental Quality makes money available where an ordinance is in place." A one-year time frame is expected for the structure to be "super convenient" according to Cheatham.

(continued on page 2)

# Public Hearing on Septic System Problem

(continued from front page)

Chairman Johansen made a motion that the November 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the full Board of Commissioners be the time when the proposed ordinance be submitted for discussion.

"This is really serious," Cheatham said, "and we have to do something. We will do the best we can."

Commission member Tom Porter questioned methods for answering complaints and was assured the solution is complaint driven, such as noticing sewer water running across a lawn.

Commission Chairman Pat Carr, urged a public meeting on the issue for Montcalm County because hearings have been held in other counties, and he wants local citizens to have an opportunity for input. Cheatham re-

sponded with, "The [ordinance] draft could be modified based on public comment. The draft can be seen at; [www.mmdhd.org/sites/default/files/Proposed%20Septic%20System%20Ordinance.pdf](http://www.mmdhd.org/sites/default/files/Proposed%20Septic%20System%20Ordinance.pdf)

Erick Smith told the Health and Human Services Committee that EMS response times are at 90.56-percent of goal, which is slightly down from last year. The county EMS service has answered 320 more calls this year than 2017.

For the first time, Medicare has denied billing request hospital transfers by ambulance for psychological patients. These claim rejections "may cause some unhappy people," Smith said, "and they have had conference calls with hospitals about a solution."

Staffing problems are

being solved through Medical First Responder classes being held in the county. Added to the classes is an offer of tuition assistance. "This has proven to be a huge boost," Smith continued. "The whole world is short of paramedics, and we have five graduating November 10, which is a huge boost."

A new ambulance expected Monday, October 1 did not make the deadline because the person hired to wire the vehicle walked off the job. Now, delivery is a couple of weeks behind.

When Commissioner Tom Lindeman asked why the increased volume of calls, Smith said Baby boomers are getting older, technology is keeping people alive longer and EMS has become primary care for some.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### If you want change, get out and vote

Once again the elected officials in Washington have shown who they really support. We are suppose to have freedom of speech, but when people speak out we are called a mob. If you want to change this get out the vote on Nov. 6, either by absentee ballot or at the polls. We need to make changes.

I don't know about anyone else, but I am tired of the Democrats being blamed for all the country's problems. We have had a Republican Senate and House in Washington as well as Lansing, and yet it is the fault of the Democrats for the road not being repaired and terrible health care cost.

Mr. Hauck may be a nice person, but he has no idea what is really going on. In his last two

fliers, he says he supports all workers and they are entitled to good paying jobs. Then please explain to me why he proceeded to vote to repeal the prevailing wage which has been very effective in getting good work done on multiple projects.

Please ignore all the mud-slinging and negative campaigning. As for the candidates, do your homework. If they are incumbents, look at their voting record. If not, attend the forums for candidates and listen to their responses. Don't just sit and think someone else is going to do your job. All the political signs in the yards do not tell you how the candidate will support senior issues as well as other important changes.

I worked for 50 years and due to increased medical cost, groceries and other expenses we are struggling as well as other se-

niors. Bankruptcies for seniors have increased due to medical cost.

Changes need to be made in Lansing as well as Washington. They have all forgotten who they are suppose to support and fight for. Our president has alienated our allies. Farmers, auto workers and others are struggling because of the tariffs. Paul Ryan stated that if tariffs are not working they should be removed.

If you want change, than get out the vote. Don't just say you are, "do it."

*Jackie Curtis  
Mt. Pleasant*

### Say no recreational marijuana proposal

As a physician specializing in family medicine and public health, I know there is clear evi-

dence of the negative health effects of marijuana, especially in youth. I also know that in states with legalized marijuana, surveyed youth state that is it "very easy" for them to get marijuana.

This is why as a parent and a doctor, I am urging a "no" vote on Proposal 1, which would legalize the recreational sale of marijuana in Michigan.

One in six teens that use marijuana will become addicted to marijuana. I know that teens that use marijuana: score worse on tests of memory and thinking; have problems learning, doing math, and reading; are less likely to graduate from high school; are more likely to have psychotic symptoms, such as hallucinations, when they become an adult; and are more likely to use other drugs, like heroin

and cocaine.

Pregnant women who use marijuana expose their unborn child, and these children are later found to have lower reading and spelling scores, be more inattentive and impulsive, and have trouble solving problems. Adults also face consequences from marijuana use. One in 11 adults that use marijuana become addicted. Adults that use marijuana daily or nearly every day can develop psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia. Marijuana use can also worsen depression and anxiety and increases the risk for suicide. Marijuana use increases the risks for car accidents and workplace accidents.

Please help protect all Michigan citizens, particularly our children: vote no on Proposal 1.

*Jennifer Morse  
Clare*