

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Caring about the water crisis in Gratiot County

The cities of Alma and St. Louis now get about 25 percent of their drinking water from the Pine River. The water from the Pine is treated with chlorine to kill the E. coli, which is present in the river. The E. coli is believed to be sourced by some of the 27 CAFOs that are in Gratiot County. A disconcerting fact is that a by-product of treating water with chlorine is the formation of a family of chemicals known as Trihalomethanes. One of the four members of the trihalomethane family is a chemical called chloroform. Chloroform is classified by the U.S. government as a "probable" human carcinogen. California considers it a "known" carcinogen. It is suspected that trihalomethane in drinking water may cause bladder, colon and rectal cancer.

The city of Alma tests for the levels of trihalomethane. It has so far once exceeded what is considered to be a safe level. However, it is still present in every glass of water that you drink that comes from the water treatment plant in Alma. The concept is simple, as the presence of E. coli continues to increase in our river, more chlorine will be required to kill the bacteria, hence more trihalomethanes (chloroform) will be present in your drinking water. The health of the Pine River should be a concern for everyone.

The presence of antibiotic resistance bacteria is another looming health hazard in the river. This has gotten very little attention so far but has the potential to be a serious health hazard. This is a direct by-product of the use of antibiotics in animal feed. It is a simple concept, what goes in, comes out and is ending up in the river. Antibiotic resistant bac-

teria hasn't been tested for in the lower Pine by Alma yet, but the antibiotic resistant bacteria has been tested for up stream and is present there in drainage tile and ditch bottoms.

It is crucial that everyone become involved in what is going on in the Pine River. A great way to start is to attend the Health Pine River meeting at 7 p.m. on June 9. The meeting will be in the Dow/Kapp science building at Alma College. Jon Allan will be there to hear our concerns. Jon was appointed by Gov. Snyder to be the director of the Michigan office of the Great Lakes. One of his jobs is to manage water quality in the state. Come to this meeting and let Lansing know that we have a water crisis in Gratiot County, and that we care about our water.

*Wayne Brooks
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