

DNR wants alternate water source

■ State will set town service boundary lines when testing is done

By NANCY MERSEREAU
Ozaukee Press staff

An alternate water system, possibly Village of Grafton water service, may be the only remedy for Town of Grafton residents with contaminated wells, according to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources specialists.

The DNR will establish the boundary areas after the agency determines how far the contamination has spread. In the meantime, the agency will continue its investigation of the source of the chemical contamination of water in wells in the Manchester Drive and Green Bay Road area near Nantucket Court and High Knoll Drive.

Federal Environmental Protection Agency resources, including funding for contamination alleviation, may also be possible. Results of EPA testing of the identified wells are due this week, according to Ken Theisen, on-scene coordinator of the EPA's Super Fund emergency response team. He did the testing last week at the affected homes in the Manchester Drive area.

Officials of the federal agency and the DNR are preparing for an informational meeting in Grafton's Multipurpose Senior Center at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 13.

The DNR believes a contamination plume a half-mile wide extends in a south-easterly direction from the edge of the Village of Grafton near Lime Kiln Park. The plume is diffused by Milwaukee River wetlands and becomes diluted until it is no longer detectable, according to Chad Czarowski, drinking water specialist with the DNR.

The DNR has tested 51 wells. Sixteen contain chemical contaminants, Czarowski said. Of those 16, five wells have chemicals in the water that exceed the safe drinking levels, according to Czarowski.

"One well has water with a chemical level that is considered unsafe for skin contact and breathing of the water vapor," Czarowski said.

Bottled water has been supplied to the five homes while Aloys and Ruth Hospel, whose water is considered not safe for contact, could receive a water filtration system this week.

The DNR wants to determine the source of the contamination.

The agency wants to drill three test wells in Lime Kiln Park to determine if the landfill site located in the park until the 1970s could be the contamination source.

The village has refused to grant permission to do the testing until it hires its own engineering firm to oversee the installation of the wells and to make sure they can be used for future monitoring. That testing will be required if the landfill site is the source of the contamination.

The village would be responsible for all costs associated with the drilling and testing if the park site is determined to be the contamination source.

Tuesday, the village board asked Village Administrator Darrell Hofland and Public Works Director Mark Gottlieb to contact engineering firms to obtain proposals for village representation.

"The chemicals found in the affected wells is associated with industrial spills and leachate from dumps," Czarowski said.

"All of the wells in the area used the same underground water source, what well drillers call limestone bedrock," Czarowski said. "This same rock is visible in Lime Kiln Park. The rock is 600 feet thick. Cracks and crevices in the rock are filled with normally clean water which is tapped by area wells."

Deeper wells are not a solution

"The affected wells range in depth from about 150 to 250 feet. Because the most dangerous volatile organic chemicals are heavier than water, drilling deeper wells is not a reliable solution because the contamination will sink."

That is why village has been asked to extend its water service to the affected properties, but village ordinances require annexation before utility services are provided.

"The annexation issue could be a hang-up," Czarowski said.

If the EPA becomes involved under its emergency response team authority, it could require the village to extend the service. The Super Fund would pay the costs, then work to discover the polluters and require them to pay for the cleanup and

water service.

Czarowski has said EPA involvement might be the best way to handle the alternate service, because federal funds would be used rather than village money.

Czarowski will also have some good news for village officials. When he and Theisen did their testing last week they found a seepage area in Lime Kiln Park. Although the EPA is testing for metals, the seepage showed no signs of the normal contaminants found in leading dump sites, he said.

"Usually you can see the leaching, but this was clear water," he said.

tests confirm what the DNR
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