

MORNING SUN

Seville Twp. officials get EGLE water test results

- [By Greg Nelson gnelson@medianewsgroup.com](mailto:gnelson@medianewsgroup.com) Oct 4, 2020



Water resource specialists from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, from left, Molly Rippke, Barney Boyer and District Supervisor Cheri Meyer, gathered water samples from the Pine River at several spots near Riverdale on Sept. 14. Rest results for E.coli level recently came back showing positive signs of decline. (Greg Nelson - The Morning Sun)

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Seville Township officials and members of a citizens committee formed to help resolve septic tank issues in Riverdale received some good news recently.

Water samples taken at several sites throughout the community on Sept. 14 by a team from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy have all been tested with results showing positive signs of declining E.coli levels in the Pine River and local storm sewers.

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"We tested great," Seville Township Supervisor Tish Mallory said. "The magic number is 300 to be below for E.coli to be within the legal limit. All of the sites tested came back below that."

EGLE took three samples at each of six locations along the Pine River from the north side of Riverdale just east of Williams Road south to the bridge on Lumberjack Road near Elm Hall.

The average of the test results for E.coli ranged from a low of 180 to a high of 275.

However, the samples taken at some sites varied greatly.

At one spot near Fifth Street tests results at the same location ranged from 210 to 330 with an average of 275.

Another off River Street ranged from 180 to 310 with an average of 250 for the three samples taken.

"That's why they take the average," Mallory explained.

She also noted that the higher levels of E.coli can be caused by animal waste running into the river.

"It doesn't mean it's from humans," Mallory said.

Four storm sewer locations were also checked with tests results coming back at 1 at three spots and 10 and the other.

The numbers will likely change as the seasons do, she added.

"That's why we really need testing done every 30 days to get the median," Mallory said.

EAGLE got involved in the situation a couple of years ago when it was discovered several septic systems were discharging waste directly into the river.

The agency conducted tests in February and October of 2018 but township officials weren't notified of the problem until they received a letter from EGLE in December of that same year.

"Why didn't they let us know earlier?" Mallory asked. "We could have started working on it. We had to wait until May of 2019."

That's when the citizens committee was formed and the township began working with the Michigan Rural Water Association to identify the problem areas.

"Since then we've gotten everything fixed," Mallory said.

However, EGLE has ordered the township to come up with a permanent solution.

The agency, along with Mid-Michigan District Health Department, would like to see a municipal wastewater treatment facility built in Riverdale.

But township officials and residents have balked at that idea due to the hefty \$6 to \$8 million price tag.

"They still want us to create a time of transfer ordinance but Gratiot County doesn't even have one," Mallory explained. "That would put us in an awkward position. It doesn't make sense."

She noted that Isabella County, which is part of the Central Michigan District Health Department, has a "time of transfer rule" that is part of the sanitary code and states that properties with onsite wells or sewage treatment systems must have them evaluated when the property is sold or transferred to a new owner.

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department, which covers Gratiot, Montcalm and Clinton counties, has considered implementing its own septic system ordinance during the past few years but has received considerable blowback from residents.

Mallory noted that EGLE has jurisdiction over the Pine River and the health department oversees wells and septic systems.

"We just want to know what's going on," Mallory said. "We have nothing to hide. We've fixed (the septic issues) and the numbers show that."