

He said the county commission is supportive to help find a solution to the river problem, as is the county's parks and recreation department.

He noted how parks and recreation had recently created a boat launch at Luneack Landing in Alma, and pointed out how important the recreational aspects of the river are.

Lambrecht said the department would also be willing to help.

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Alma intends to find out what's happening to the Pine River

By Linda Gittleman, The Morning Sun

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Unless the city takes the lead, Alma City Manager Phil Moore said no one else is going to test the water quality of the Pine River.

Since Alma gets 25 percent of its water from the river and tests by Alma College professors indicate that the river quality has deteriorated significantly with large amounts of E-coli, Tetracycline and manure, something has to be done.

St. Louis, which will begin getting its drinking water from the Gratiot Area Water Authority transmitted from Alma's water treatment plant in the fall, is keenly interested too.

"No one is testing the water quality," Moore told the board of commissioners Tuesday.

The health department can't because it doesn't have the money to test surface water, Moore said, and the Department of Environmental Quality has not volunteered to test the water yet.

"I get calls from people wanting to know if it's safe to sprinkle their yards with river water," Moore said. "Is there enough E-coli present to be a health hazard?"

Moore proposed that city staffers take water samples and send them on to the state's laboratory for analysis. He's not certain of the cost, but expects it might be in the neighborhood of \$3,000.

Grants may be available, he said.

Commissioners were in favor of the plan.

Moore said the city wants the state to complete the testing to make sure it meets the state's protocols and requirements so that when the results are published, the state can stand behind them.

The drinking water from Alma's treatment plant is tested daily and Moore said he's confident of the city's water.

As for the river though, Moore said it's critical to identify the problem first and then figure out a solution.

Moore said he's thinking now to take two samples of the river water twice a week in the city and another sample under the Harrison Road bridge.

He's also looking to partner with other groups and agencies, such as the health department.

Michigan State University's Extension Office has agreed to be a part of the program, he said in the work session, and he's looking for others.

At the formal meeting, Gratiot County Commissioner Tim Lambrecht, who represents the 4th district, which includes Alma's precincts 1 and 3, and Arcada Township, spoke to the board.