

IEPA locates source of Cargill discharge

By PETE NENNI

Officials from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) say the source of water discharging into the Fox River from the Cargill, Inc. chemical plant, has been located and steps will be taken to correct the situation.

John Raevuori, an IEPA specialist for Kane and McHenry counties, said he has visited the plant on three occasions in the past month to investigate charges from a number of residents, including Carpentersville Trustee Mary Srajer, that the company has been polluting the river.

Raevuori said the problem is not being caused from chemical discharge coming directly from the plant, but from a broken underground fire protection line that is leaking water into a dirty storm water settling tank, before spilling into the Fox River.

"The problem is a storm water collection system that gathers into a settling tank that needs to be cleaned out, there is

no discharge water at all," he said Monday.

He said Cargill officials have promised to cooperate with the IEPA to correct the situation as soon as possible and are now in the process of cleaning the tank, hoping to meet state standards within two to three weeks.

"Whatever the problem is in the tank, they're going to clean it out for us," Raevuori said.

He added, it will cost a great amount of money to repair the broken pipe because it is underground and work has been scheduled to begin in the first part of June.

Samples of the water will be taken after the repairs have been completed to determine if the plant is meeting waste water standards.

Raevuori said the evaluation of the plant was not a detailed assessment of the system, which would include the tracing of pipe lines, but consisted of a walk through of the facility with plant officials.

Although he did not take any water quality samples during his visit to the plant last week, Raevuori said he believes the water spilling from the settling tank into the river would create more oxygen demands than what the IEPA's

limitations require.

However, he pointed out that the dillution, or the natural breaking up of the water coming into the river is so great that
(Continued on page 6)

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Cargill—

(Continued from page 5)
only a small amount of environmental damage is being done.

Keith Long, Cargill's plant superintendent, said Tuesday, that plant officials were the ones responsible for finding the problems and pointing them out to the IEPA.

He added, the broken length of pipe is a village water line on the company's fire protection line that cracked before freezing.

Long said the settling tank, which is cleaned two times each year, has already been cleaned and there were no orders issued by the IEPA for the work to be done.

He believes the water that is now running into the river is not causing any contamination and is sampled on an hourly basis each day for quality.

Even in the event of a chemical spill at the plant, Long said Cargill is equipped with a 35,000-gallon underground storage tank, which hold the spill before sending it through a three-stage cleaning process, before it comes in contact with the river.

He said the only way there might be a problem at the plant is if there were a rainfall heavy enough to cause an overflow of the storm water storage tank and a spill at the same time.

However, it would take a rainfall of about four-inches in an hour to overflow the storm water system, Long said.