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1800 Improvement In State's Water Quality Noted

Water quality in Wisconsin is improving gradually, and rapid improvement is likely within the next decade.

This is the basic message in the 300-page "Annual Water Quality Report to Congress," published by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The report points out that of the state's 3,360 miles of major rivers, all but 305 miles meet national water quality standards which must be attained by 1983, and that of the 703 major industrial wastewater dischargers, 411 appear to be meeting effluent standards set for 1977.

Sections of the report, however, make it clear problems remain which include:

- Polluted runoff from farms and cities, a problem that is more obvious as industrial and municipal discharges are cleaned up.

- Erosion problems. The state Board of Soil and Water Conservation districts estimates that 7.2 million of the state's 12.3 million acres of cropland have dominant erosion problems which contribute silt and fertilizer to streams.

- Urban storm water after rains, carrying pollutants from lawns, streets and construction sites.

- Trace amount of toxic chemicals in fish. No sooner are some brought under control than others arise. The ban on DDT brought a decline of residues in Lake Michigan fish, but polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) have been noted in fish from Lake Pepin, Lake Michigan and the Upper Fox River.

- Cleaning up discharges from municipal sewage treatment

plants is likely to be difficult and expensive as industrial pollution control. All sanitary sewers lead to some kind of treatment plant, and 98 per cent of sewered areas are served by secondary plants. But as the public demand increases for clean water and standards get tougher, the treatment plants need frequent modernization.

- Of the state's 550 treatment plants discharging into surface waters, 213 have been improved or rebuilt during the past five years to, and 99 now meet the requirements of the 1977 state and

federal effluent limits. However, more than 500 are on the waiting list for federal grants which will be used for further improvement. At least \$1 billion will have to be spent to bring these plants and their sewer systems up to anticipated 1990 needs.

The report notes that readers will probably pick up its most significant message: The fact engineering, dollars and law enforcement alone will not produce clean water. Traditional attitudes toward the uses of water and costs will have to be altered if the state is to reach its clean water goals.