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June 24, 1993

Letters From the People
St. Louis Post Dispatch
900 N. Tucker Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63101

Dear Editor:

The Post's June 22 article on "polluted sewer systems" muddled the issue of water quality.

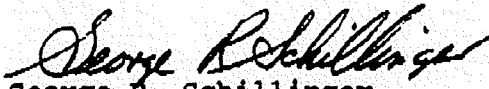
Wastewater treatment plants are built to treat "polluted" or contaminated water from the community. It should not be surprising and certainly not such an important new concept to deserve front page of the editorial section status that sewers leading to a wastewater treatment plant carry "polluted" water. Wastewater treatment plants, today, must operate under strict environmental permits which ensure their discharges are protective of human health and water quality regardless of the material in the incoming wastewater.

Furthermore, the article would lead you to believe that the pollutants in the sewers pass untreated to the river. This simply is not true. For example, the wastewater facilities for the Village of Sauget neutralized almost 21 million pounds of equivalent hydrochloric acid in 1991. This was accomplished by adding lime which results in an innocuous salt, calcium chloride.

Many industries produce unrecoverable acids as by-products of their manufacturing processes and neutralize the acids on their property. When handled in this manner, there is no report of "toxic" discharges. The only reason why our customers must report their acid discharges in the annual EPA survey is that their discharges leave the industries' properties and are treated at a municipal wastewater plant.

One can expect environmental distortions from activists groups as they pursue their political agenda, but a more thorough discussion of the facts should be expected from the Post.

Sincerely,


George R. Schillinger
General Manager
American Bottoms Regional
Wastewater Treatment Facility

CITY OF EAST ST. LOUIS

VILLAGE OF SAUGET

VILLAGE OF CAHOKIA

COMMONFIELDS OF CAHOKIA PUBLIC WATER DISTRICT

METRO EAST SANITARY DISTRICT

DSW 134925

Sewer Systems Badly Polluted, Area Consumer Groups Warn

By Christine Bertelson
and Estela Villanueva
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

THINKING OF GOING fishing or swimming in a local lake, river or stream this summer?

Better think again, says Heidi Hill, a clean-water activist with the Missouri Public Interest Research Group.

The sewer systems of Illinois and Missouri — which ultimately discharge treated water into rivers and streams — are among the most heavily polluted in the nation, according to reports issued Monday by the Illinois and Missouri public interest research groups.

"For consumers' health this summer, they should find out what chemicals have been dumped into the rivers," Hill said. "Find out if there are any fishing or swimming advisories."

The research group's studies were based on 1991 pollution reports that industries must file each year with the federal Environmental Protection Agency. The figures are the most recent available.

Illinois industries reported discharging the most toxic releases (59 million pounds) in the nation to sewage treatment plants in 1991, according to the report. Three industries in the Metro East area were among the worst polluters in the state. They are:

- Monsanto Co.'s chemical plant in Sauget, which ranked first in the state and second in the nation with 20.5 million pounds of toxic material sent to sewage treatment plants.

- Harcros Pigments Inc. of East St. Louis, which ranked fourth in the state by releasing 2.5 million pounds.

- Amoco Petroleum Additives Co. in Wood River, which was fifth with 2.4 million pounds.

Between 1989 and 1991, the Harcros plant reduced release of the chemical to its treatment facility by 80 percent, said spokesman James Valentino.

"We're trying to reduce those releases that are considered to be toxic," Valentino said.

"Through 1995 we should continue to see reductions to get at or below the level allowed by the EPA."

Missouri ranked sixth in the nation, with more than 26 million pounds of industrial chemicals released to sewage-treatment plants.

Columbian Chemicals Co. led the list, discharging 14.4 million pounds of toxic waste. Columbian Chemicals operates two plants in St. Louis.

"All our permanent discharges go to the sewer system," where they are treated, said Gary Juno, senior counsel for Columbian Chemicals in Atlanta. "They do not go to the waters of the U.S. The goal of the company is to be environmentally responsible."

Columbian Chemicals makes iron oxide, a pigment used for paint and building materials.

Gary Barton, director of environmental communications for Monsanto Co., said the discharges from its Krummrich plant in Sauget are acids that are neutralized before they end up in the Mississippi.

"What goes into the Mississippi is really not a problem," Barton said. "The water is treated and rendered non-toxic, and treated a second time."

Ammonia discharged from Monsanto's Queeny plant in St. Louis is treated by the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District before it goes into the river, Barton said.

Illinois industries discharged more than 6 million pounds of pollutants to surface waters. In Missouri, industries dumped more than 1.2 million pounds of pollutants to surface waters.

The consumer groups urged industries to cut the amount of chemicals they use, rather than dump them into sewage systems that were not designed to handle toxic chemicals.

The consumer groups in more than 30 states have joined forces with the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society and the Nature Conservancy to lobby for a stronger Clean Water Act. The law is up for reauthorization this year, and hearings are under way in Congress.

TOP POLLUTERS LISTED

Illinois

Top Five Polluters of Sewer Systems

Monsanto Co., Sauget
Rockford Wire Technology,
Rockford
Corn Products and Best Foods, Bedford Park
Harcros Pigments, East St. Louis
Amoco Petroleum Additives Co., Wood River

Top Five Polluters of Surface Water

3M, Cordova
IBP Inc., Geneseo
B.F. Goodrich, Henry
Phoenix Chemical Co., East Dubuque
Allied-Signal Inc., Metropolis

Missouri

Top Five Polluters of Sewer Systems

Columbian Chemicals Co., St. Louis
Mallinckrodt Specialty, St. Louis
Monsanto Co., St. Louis
Blue Side Cos. Inc., St. Joseph
Chrysler Motors Corp., Fenton

Top Five Polluters of Surface Water

Ireco Inc., Louisiana
ICI Explosives USA Inc., Joplin
Biokrywa Inc., Cape Girardeau
LaRoche Industries Inc., Crystal City
Miles Inc., Kansas City

In Missouri, information on health, swimming or fishing advisories for streams is available from the Department of Health at (314) 751-8062 or the Department of Natural Resources at (314) 751-1300.

In Illinois, information on pollution in waterways is available from the Department of Public Health at (217) 782-4977 or the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency at (217) 752-3397.

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