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# Fight vowed over Pepin pollution

By DON BOXMEYER

Staff Writer

Mrs. Edwin Hill is a proud, year-round resident of tiny Deer Island on the Wisconsin side of Lake Pepin, where the sailboats sail, the towboats tow, the floods flood and man pollutes. Now she's bad it, she said, with the Metropolitan Waste Control Commission.

After watching in recent years the oil slicks and worse darken Deer Island's beaches, lawns and trees, the "last straw" would be the planned discharge of up to 1 billion gallons of raw sewage into the Mississippi River this spring from the Twin Cities area. Lake Pepin is a widening of the river southeast of the Twin Cities.

The Waste Control Commission is asking permission of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (PCA) to divert that amount of untreated wastes into the river so that two major interceptor lines can be visually inspected.

**THE BYPASS** would be made over an eight-day period in April or May, when the river flow is at its peak and dilution would minimize the effects of the sewage on the river.

"I think they're trying to do the best they can," Mrs. Hill said, "but we've just had it down here. This is the last straw. There must be some other way to do it (inspect the sewers). The people at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources feel there is."

The Metropolitan Waste Control Commission wanted to divert raw sewage last year but gave up when it was pointed out that to bypass intentionally required a variance. Granting of a variance required a public hearing and that would have required public notice and so farth.

Now, inspection of the huge interceptors, literally the lifelines of the metropolitan sewer system, can't wait any longer, sewer inspection people say. Any serious fracture or erosion could cause a disastrous break that would put the entire Twin Cities treatment plant near Pig's Eye Lake out of business for an extended period.

"I don't think the people in St. Paul realize what they're doing," Mrs. Hill said. "I guess they consider the whole river their private resource. Meanwhile, Lake Pepin is right on the way to becoming another Lake Erie."

**DEER ISLAND** residents complained last year when towboats pumped sewage into Lake Pepin as they waited in line to go through Lock & Dam No. 4 at Alma, Wis. Fish taken from Lake Pepin contain high levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a toxic industrial chemical that some suspect is discharged upstream and settles into the bottom sediment.

Mrs. Hill disputes the argument of the Waste Control Commission that sewage bypassed during high-flow periods would be diluted to acceptable levels.

"Lake Pepin is not fast-flowing," she said. "They should see the debris that floats in here and stays here . . ."

It is bitterly ironic, Mrs. Hill said, that people in her little community must adhere to strict waste disposal codes.

"My husband is a zoning administrator here," she said. "He has to go up into the hills and tell little farm women they can't throw their dishwater outside. That's how strict we are with ourselves."

**MRS. HILL HAS** organized about 100 families into "Citizens Against Pollution of Lake Pepin."

She will testify, she said, at the PCA's formal public hearing Thursday into the Waste Control Commission's variance request. That hearing will begin at 9 a.m. in the PCA headquarters, 1935 W. County Road B-2, Roseville.

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