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DNR Says Quality of Wisconsin's Rivers Is Improving

Madison, Wis. —UPI— Overall water quality in Wisconsin is improving gradually, the Department of Natural Resources says.

The DNR said rapid improvement was likely within the next decade as new federal and state programs begin to take effect, but that much more work to clean up waters remained.

In its annual water quality report to Congress, the DNR said that of Wisconsin's 3,360 miles of major rivers, all but 305 miles already met national water quality standards that must be attained by 1983.

Of the 703 major industrial wastewater dischargers in the state, 411 appeared to be meeting effluent limits set for 1977, the report said.

Financial projections showed that municipalities would be spending \$651 mil-

lion in sewage treatment plant construction between now and 1990, and that the pulp and paper industry would spend \$653 million on pollution control in the same period, the department said.

The DNR said pollution run-off from farms and cities remained a serious problem. It was estimated that 7.2 million of Wisconsin's 12.3 million acres of cropland have erosion problems which contribute silt and fertilizer to streams.

Urban stormwater enters streams after every rain, carrying pollutants from lawns, streets and construction sites. Solutions in this area are

"many years and dollars away," the DNR said.

Trace amounts of toxic chemicals in fish still are a problem and "no sooner are some of these substances brought under control than others arise to take their place," the agency said.

Since the statewide ban on DDT, concentrations of DDT in Lake Michigan fish have declined. But recently, high concentrations of PCBs, a toxic industrial chemical, have been found in fish from Lake Michigan, Lake Pepin and part of the upper Fox River.

Cleaning up discharges from municipal sewage treatment

plants is likely to be as difficult and expensive as industrial pollution control, the DNR said. So far, Wisconsin has been ahead of many other states in this field.

All sanitary sewers in the state lead to some kind of treatment plant, and 96% of the population with sewers is served by secondary treatment of sewage, the report said.

Of the state's 556 treatment plants that discharge into surface waters, 212 have been improved or rebuilt in the last five years. A total of 99 now meet requirements of 1977 state and federal effluent level limits.

More than 500 plants are on the waiting list for federal dollars for further improvement and at least \$1 billion will have to be spent to bring them up to anticipated 1990 treatment needs.

The DNR said its own \$144

million program to help municipalities and industries build sewage treatment plants was expected to run dry by September of 1976, three years earlier than anticipated.

The DNR board is expected to consider the problem at its Thursday meeting at Tomah.