



Candice S. Miller

Public Works Commissioner
Macomb County

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Green substance in Clinton Township creek not toxic
Dye was used to check for illicit sewage connection

A Clinton Township creek that turned bright green over the weekend did not change color because of antifreeze or any other toxic substance, according to Macomb County Public Works and township officials.

The extreme discoloration of the Cranberry Marsh Drain south of 17 Mile Road, west of Garfield Road, was caused by a non-toxic dye that was used to check for illicit sewage connections and discharges.

The Macomb County Public Works Office and the Clinton Township Fire Department were notified around noon Sunday of the discoloration.

“We immediately went into our emergency response protocols,” Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller said Monday.

Booms that absorb petroleum products were placed downstream in the event any substance was petroleum-based. An environmental services contractor was contacted and collected water samples for analysis. The Environmental Health Services division of the Macomb County Health Department began checking to see whether any dye tests were performed in the area recently. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) was notified and monitored the situation.

Dye tests are performed to trace underground sanitary wastewater and storm water systems, and also are used to verify where plumbing from inside a building discharges to, once the sanitary waste leaves a building. Dye tests are typically performed by public works departments, municipalities, health departments, state staff, or consultants and engineers.

Approved dyes are non-toxic and are sometimes compared to food coloring. Officials learned Monday morning that the Clinton Township Water and Sewer Department had tested a sump pump in the area on Friday, using a high concentration of the dye.

Images of the Cranberry Marsh Drain on Sunday were likened by some observers to how the city of Chicago uses dye to turn the Chicago River green for St. Patrick’s Day.

“Good intentions, but it’s the wrong holiday. This is actually Thanksgiving week, it’s not St. Patrick’s Day,” Miller quipped.

“The township was doing dye testing because they had thought there might be an illegal sanitary sewer connection, which they fortunately found out was not the case. They didn’t dilute the dye enough and some people thought it looked like the Chicago River, it was so green. It’s non-toxic and doesn’t hurt humans or animals,” Miller said.

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“The township Water and Sewer Department had the right intention as we always do. In this case, that’s protecting the public and environment and being proactive by checking on a tip that there was an illegal sump pump connection in the area,” Clinton Township Supervisor Robert Cannon said. The dye will enter the Clinton River today and is diluting upstream. “There’s no cause for alarm,” Miller said. “It is very good that the public actually notified us, so we appreciate the public’s help. We have zero tolerance for any contaminants in our waterways.”

PHOTO:

The Cranberry Marsh drain as it looked Sunday, Nov. 21. The discoloration was caused by a non-toxic dye.

VIDEO:

Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller discusses the discoloration of the Cranberry Marsh Drain in Clinton Township. <https://youtu.be/7AsCx7Zapm8>



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