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Sewage Bootlegging Onto the Shore of Lake Ontario*

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## SEWAGE BOOTLEGGING ONTO THE SHORE OF LAKE ONTARIO

On Sunday, October 23, a resident of Lake Bluff Road, Irondequoit, called to report a flow of bad-smelling liquid from a culvert which empties onto the beach of Lake Ontario, a few hundred yards west of Sea Breeze. Dry weather and the strong odor suggested sewage.

An hour later at the site, I found a small rivulet flowing from the culvert, across the beach, and into the lake. The rate of flow seemed to be about a few gallons per minute. No coarse solids were seen, but the liquid was cloudy from fine suspended solids; and it looked and smelled like the liquid portion of sewage.

A sample was assayed for coliform bacteria by a simple method; diluted aliquots were spread on MacConkey's agar plates, which were then incubated overnight at 37°. Even the plate receiving the smallest sample (equivalent to 0.001 ml.) developed so many typical coliform colonies that they could not be accurately counted. The plate was estimated to have at least 1000 colonies, which would correspond to a coliform index for the original sample of 100 million coliforms/100 ml.!! Although the method used for this count is not an official one, there is no doubt that there was a very high concentration of coliform bacteria in the sample.

On Monday, I contacted Mr. Duane Tillotson, of the Irondequoit Sanitation Department. He explained that there had been occasional discharges from this culvert in the past. The culvert is the terminus of a system of storm drains, partly open and partly underground built at different times by different builders. No complete plan of the system exists. He believes that there must be an illegal connection of a septic tank to the system, but has been unable to find it. The sporadic occurrence of the flow, and the lack of solids, suggests a septic tank which fills up and then empties or is emptied into a storm drain.

Although there is a sanitary sewage pumping station on the embankment above the culvert with an overflow connection to the culvert, this would operate only under very unusual conditions, such as the blockage of the sanitary sewer beyond the pump.

Mr. Tillotson called me back on Tuesday, and said that he had inspected the site. The flow was reduced to mere seepage, and therefore could not be traced to its source. There was no problem with the pumping station, and he plans to block off the overflow connection since he believes it to be unnecessary. This would eliminate any possibility that the pumping station could be responsible for any flow observed in the future.

Mr. Tillotson has assured me that he would investigate any new reports of a substantial dry-weather flow immediately. A man is on duty at the Sanitation Department seven days a week until midnight, and he will get a message to Mr. Tillotson. Call FI 2-4948.

Conclusion

Undiluted sewage is flowing, albeit sporadically, accross a beach where neighborhood children play. Furthermore, the location is only a few hundred yards from Durand-Eastman Beach. It is hoped that interested persons will help the Irondequoit Sanitation Department in tracking down this source, or any similar source, of potentially dangerous pollution.

J.R. Christensen