

Oakland County water commissioner: We all want clean water

Jim Nash Published 3:29 p.m. ET Oct. 19, 2017



(Photo: Kathleen Galligan, Detroit Free Press)

I would like to commend the Detroit Free Press for tackling a complex and often esoteric topic in its series of articles involving water quality in and around [Lake St. Clair](http://www.freep.com/story/news/2017/09/29/lake-metropark-clair-beach-closures-michigan/587126001/) ([/story/news/2017/09/29/lake-metropark-clair-beach-closures-michigan/587126001/](http://www.freep.com/story/news/2017/09/29/lake-metropark-clair-beach-closures-michigan/587126001/)). This is a daunting task especially when it appears that there are competing factions with differing claims and approaches, but who all want the same thing – clean, fresh water.

Oakland County has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to treat combined sewer overflows, or CSOs. That includes \$144 million to increase the capacity of the George W. Kuhn (GWK) Retention Treatment Facility in Madison Heights, to its current capacity of about 124 million gallons.

Samples from this facility routinely confirm that our treatment and disinfection process is effective. While it is true that the GWK has treated and released permitted discharge flows into the Red Run subwatershed, those events account for less than one one hundredth of 1% of the total flow, compared to the untreated flow from 228,194 square miles from the Red Run Subwatershed, the Clinton River Watershed, the St. Clair River and the Lake St. Clair Regional sub-basin drainage area, which includes Canada.

At the Oct. 2 Town Hall in Macomb County, the DEQ released a statement that said, in part: “It is the Water Resources Division's determination that beach closure dates are not consistent with discharge from the GWK RTB ... more likely nearby sources than the GWK.”

I am well aware that there are those who believe we are not doing enough. While I find no fault with their passion, I am confident, and the evidence confirms, that my staff and I are leading the way to ensure our water quality is protected.

I also want to reiterate that there are extensive regional efforts currently underway to address water quality throughout southeast Michigan. For example, Oakland County has contributed significant resources while working closely with the Great Lakes Water Authority on its master planning effort to address water quality.

As an environmentalist and elected public official, I've been working on water quality issues for years. Since becoming water resources commissioner, I have assembled a group of influential leaders, stakeholders and elected officials who meet on an annual basis to find the best ways to address water quality issues in our region. This year's event will take place Friday.

I welcome constructive discussions and will continue to support regional efforts that lead to continuing progress to improve water quality through sensible and cost-effective measures.

Watch out! Deals, sweepstakes, freebies and more are falling like leaves.

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