

It's time to crack down on groundwater polluters

Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice? Not this time, Cedarburg groundwater polluters.

As reported in the News Graphic, the town of Cedarburg is considering reviewing a conditional use permit request, related to filling the R&R Quarry with soil from mostly unknown locations. The quarry has an exemption from the Department of Natural Resources to allow soil with "low-level contaminants," and reportedly thousands of truckloads of soil have already been dumped at the site. But the quarry has no current reclamation plan for filling the quarry on file with the town, and even the willingly-neutered DNR seems uncertain about the completeness of the process followed by the quarry owner and consulting partners.



TIM SCHILKE

OZAUKEE OUTLOOK

This debate raises some interesting environmental and procedural questions. First of all, why would a community already waging multiple environmental battles with polluted rivers and drinking water ever agree to accept any level (arbitrarily "low" or not) of contaminated soils as quarry fill from known polluted sites in Milwaukee? Specifically, why would the town of Cedarburg even consider allowing this to occur at Highway 60 and Highway I, near Five Corners, the proverbial "ground zero" of Cedarburg's existing groundwater contamination problem?

Perhaps the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources or a private consulting firm might come back in a few months and reassure residents that the thousands of truckloads of already-dumped soils pass "acceptable levels" of carcinogens and other pollutants. But please remember that this is a version of the Wisconsin DNR whose leader, Cathy Stepp, admittedly believes the DNR should never stand in the way of for-profit business — think swinging door environmental policy.

Cedarburg's water troubles have a long history of this sort of lax regulation. For example, who originally signed off on the dumping of Mercury Marine and Amcast byproducts in Cedar Creek decades ago? Were those pollutants once deemed to meet an "acceptable level" of deadliness, before eventually landing a large portion of the creek on the Environmental Protection Agencies Superfund cleanup site list (an environmental catastrophe still unresolved to this day)? How many times did consultants conduct groundwater and soil tests in the area around the Prochnow landfill, only to come back within "acceptable levels" of extremely

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hazardous carcinogens, just months or years before those same pollutants allegedly made their way into the city of Cedarburg's water supply, subsequently shutting down one of the city's wells?

The dumping already done in the R&R Quarry, allegedly without completing appropriate paperwork or an agreed upon reclamation plan, is a potential travesty on multiple levels — failed governmental enforcement, potentially improper business practice and potential further pollution of an area of Cedarburg already wrought with environmental problems.

For example, some of the soils already used to fill the quarry reportedly came from the Bishop's Creek tannery site in Milwaukee, a property so contaminated that numerous developers turned down opportunities at the site due to the significant level of soil pollution. One of the byproducts of a tannery is hexavalent chromium, widely known as the toxic carcinogen from the famous true story in California that inspired the movie, Erin Brokovich. Still, someone apparently thought it would be a great idea to extract some of the soil from that site onto trucks and dump it at the R&R Quarry just north of the city of Cedarburg, without a specific reclamation plan in place. Hooray for progress.

There are many solutions for cleaning up a known contaminated tannery site. Some solutions are cheaper solutions — like transferring the problem to a sometimes environmentally gullible, free-market-oriented suburb like Cedarburg, to satisfy the profit motives of a few individuals in the community. Some solutions are more expensive and complex, like shipping the soil to remote areas not located literally right next to major suburban water supplies.

The town of Cedarburg needs to take three immediate actions. ■ Permanently deny any additional conditional use permits related to the R&R Quarry site, considering the apparent breach of regulatory process which has already occurred.

■ Don't waste money on private consultant-produced or DNR reports regarding soils already dumped in the quarry. With apologies for being a bit of an environmental activism cynic, I don't expect the reports to return anything other than, "Perfectly safe soil within acceptable levels. Nothing to see here." It's clear from other recent news stories around the state that the DNR can no longer be trusted to protect Wisconsin residents, or our environment. Residents don't want contaminated soil trucked into Cedarburg for any reason, at any "low" level. No amount of testing will change this fact.

■ Require the soils to be loaded back on trucks and returned to the contaminated site(s) from where they originated, or at least require the quarry owner to relocate the soils away from Cedarburg's water supply. I'm sure those toxic waste dumps don't want the soil back, and I'm sure the process will be an expensive legal and logistical nightmare, but it must be done.

Unpatriotic Packers schedules

At the Fourth of July parade in Cedarburg, the Ozaukee County Republican Party handed out Packer schedules. By itself, that's not an unusual activity. But on the back of the schedule, the card said, "Obama (with the O in the shape of a Communist hammer and sickle) — Want to throw out this garbage?" Please note the always classy direct reference to the president of the United States as "garbage." Not, "Want to end Obama's garbage policies?" I asked the Ozaukee County Republican Party for an official statement on this ridiculously unpatriotic political handout on the day that all Americans celebrate our country's freedom and independence, but I received no response.

Let's recap the job performance that constitutes "garbage" to local Republicans. Our "garbage," hammer-and-sickle president signed a health care law grounded in market-based mandated health insurance, an idea which came originally from the Conservative Heritage Foundation, and withstood a challenge in the majority-conservative United States Supreme Court. Our hammer-and-sickle president extended the Bush-era tax cuts, while overseeing 28 consecutive months of job growth in the wake of a nearly unprecedented global economic crisis. Our "garbage" president managed to find and kill Osama Bin Laden and decimate Al Qaeda, while ending the unrelated war in Iraq. As Forrest Gump might say, garbage is as garbage does.

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Please pray for some rain

My family went down to the desert Southwest for a vacation at the beginning of July. It started raining on us as soon as we passed into New Mexico.

It had been so long since Quinn, my youngest son, had seen rain he asked, "What is that wet stuff coming out of the sky?"

We went over to Chaco Canyon to see some Anasazi ruins and it had rained so much there we had to ford a (normally nonexistent) swollen stream.

When we hiked the majestic Wheeler Peak (the highest mountain in New Mexico), it rained on us at the top — and hailed on us on the way down.

"This could be the worst thing that ever happened to me," exclaimed Pierce, my eldest son, as he limped back down the mountain amid the tumult. (But I think he secretly liked it.)

We went by to see the Native Americans at Taos Pueblo and the elderly gentleman who sold Susan, my



Today's columnist

Van Mobley

VIEWPOINT

wife, some silver earrings said, "We have a big Pow-Wow tonight and I hope it doesn't rain."

"What happens if it does rain?" I asked him.

"Our feathers get wet," was the reply. "Could you do a rain dance for Wisconsin at the Pow-Wow?" I asked him earnestly.

"It doesn't work when our feathers

are wet," he explained.

On the way back through Nebraska I noticed they don't need rain there to make their corn grow. Instead they suck water out of the Platte and spray it over the crop using big irrigation systems.

In most of Iowa things looked OK, too. But the closer we got to Thiensville the drier and drier it became, and the more and more political signs we saw. I wondered if there is some sort of connection.

Maybe the inordinate volume of political hot air released in this state this year is drying us out.

"I would trade all the hot air for a decent rain," I thought to myself as I went to sleep on the first night of our return. I am not kidding either.

Pray for rain.

Van Mobley is president of the village of Thiensville and an associate professor at Concordia University Wisconsin.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mequon's historic American Legion building is in jeopardy

To the Editor

"They should never touch this American Legion Post 457 because the building is historical Mequon, built in the mid 1800s!"

The preceding is a quote from long-time Mequon resident, Virgil Wolfgang, who is now 87 years old, and recalls the following:

This historical, two-room schoolhouse, named Thoreau Schoolhouse, was built in the mid-1800s. Virgil moved to Mequon in 1946 and his two daughters attended this schoolhouse.

Virgil was instrumental in defeating annexation attempts by Milwaukee, Germantown and Cedarburg. Mr. Wolfgang obtained petitions by going door-to-door to convert the then-Mequon township into a 4th class city in 1958. The hallowed halls of our schoolhouse played host to many of Mr. and Mrs. Wolfgang's wedding anniversaries as well as countless dances and gatherings of all types. In 1965, it was purchased by the Howard Schroeder Legion Post and retains that name today.

There is no reason to destroy such a well-built building; this building is indeed a cherished landmark of our fair city.

American Legion Post Number 457, 6006 North Mequon Road, is easily recognized at the intersection of Mequon Road (Highway 167) and Cedarburg Road (Highway 57) by the actual M60 Tank and 155mm Howitzer proudly displayed on the front lawn.

I interviewed Virgil Wolfgang to alert/enlighten Mequon citizens to the plight of American Legion Post 457 (Thoreau Schoolhouse) whose irreplaceable history is being threatened in the name of progress!

To remove this part of Mequon's early history would, indeed, deprive our youth of real, local Americana and cause a painful loss to our heroic veterans and their memories.

— Dick Holicek, Mequon

Let's not polarize our children's education

To the Editor

I could only sadly shake my head as I read state Sen. Grothman's Guest Viewpoint "There's still a need to be vigilant locally about sex ed." Vigilant against what? Is there a "vast left-wing conspiracy" where the goal is, in his own words, "early sexualization of young children and an early exposure to homosexuality?" Is it a "radical curriculum" that "promotes dignity and respect for all people?" One that would hopefully start to decrease the incredible psychological and physical abuse that so many gay teens have had to suffer through?

Give me a break. I am one of the so-called "experts" he disparages. I was asked to serve on the Cedarburg Human Growth and Development Advisory Committee last year to add my voice as a medical professional (but also as a parent of two recent Cedarburg High School graduates). The committee also had other parents, clergy, teachers and two CHS students. We met for over 20 hours over several months and became very familiar with what was and was not being proposed. There was never a

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thought to just adopt a curriculum proposed by any outside group and the teachers were very sensitive to modifying any curriculum so it presented only age appropriate information at the various grade levels. To boil the issue down to editorial page size, these are some of the main points.

1.) The United States has the highest teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates in the industrialized world. Seven times the pregnancy rate of the Netherlands, 74 times the adolescent gonorrhea rate of France and eight times the teen abortion rate of Germany; and in all these countries, teenagers have sexual intercourse at a later age than U.S. teens! What are they doing right that we are not? The answer is in these countries: sex ed is a public health issue driven by research. In the U.S. it has been more of a political issue driven by ideology and controversy.

2.) Studies across the nation, from urban big city schools to small high schools in suburban or rural communities, all show the same statistics that anywhere from a third to a half of high school students are sexually active.

3.) Sexual activity without proper education and information can have serious emotional and physical consequences. Some STIs can be easily treated but others can lead to lifetime of infection, sterility and even death. For example, the human papilloma virus (HPV) is a completely silent infection that years or decades later cause cervical cancer in women and numerous head and neck cancers in men. We can certainly teach "abstinence is best," but we can't close our eyes to the one-third to one-half of teens who don't get the message or choose not to listen. Even if we naively thought the "Cedarbubble" protected our teens from all of the above, they still are heading off to a big college campus or a big town as an 18- or 19-year-old. We educate our children to prepare them for life beyond the few years they spend in Cedarburg schools and expect that knowledge to be portable and serve them for the rest of their lives; their sexual education should be no different.

Most people would agree that a successful sexual education program would help teens delay the onset of sexual activity, reduce the frequency of sexual activi-

ty, reduce the number of sexual partners, decrease the rate of teen pregnancy and increase the use of contraception and condoms when they do choose to become sexually active. The scientific consensus is very clear on this. Comprehensive sex ed programs that promote abstinence as the preferred choice but then also provide education about contraception and disease prevention do achieve the goals stated above. Abstinence only or abstinence-until-marriage programs do not. This is the stated opinion of the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Institutes of Health, to name a few.

Let's stop playing political games with our children's and grandchildren's education and health. Let's stop vilifying our teachers who play such an important role in our children's lives. And, most definitely, let's stay vigilant about the facts of what our children's education is and should be and not let politicians or small groups with the loudest voices hijack our children's future.

— Dr. Boyd Miller, Cedarburg

Why does Packers schedule promote anti-Obama rhetoric?

To the Editor

I read with interest different experiences people had at the Fourth of July parades this year and felt compelled to share my experience. I had the opportunity to sit in the shade and enjoy the parade. When the Republican group came by, they offered me a "Packer schedule." I politely said, "No thank you." They insisted that I take it because "I would enjoy the back of it." When I turned it over, it was filled with offensive anti-President Obama rhetoric. Apparently the Republicans realize that if they discuss issues and policy, they lose, so they resort to name calling. Or maybe they just don't know what their candidate's policy is?

— Deb Spiering, Cedarburg

Don't let setbacks for commercial buildings come to an end

To the Editor

I can't help but wonder about the location of the new office and bank building being constructed at the corner of Port Washington Road and Mequon Road. Being the busiest intersection in the city, I would think the approval process would have taken into consideration that all other buildings along the corridor in both directions have substantial setbacks where this two-story building is being constructed much closer to the intersection of major roadways, with parking apparently located behind the building. Green space in front will be minimal at best.

The rendering of the building is attractive and an appropriate use for the site, but as located, this building is much too close to the intersection; any proposed future changes or improvement at this corner would be somewhere between difficult and impossible. I hope this precedent setting approval is not the beginning of the end of setbacks for commercial development in Mequon.

— Robert Rakers, Mequon