The Sandusky Register

**Water quality discussions planned**

(4/3)

Erie County’s main stream pollution monitor, Breann Hohman, will present detailed reports on the water quality for three local streams in two separate public meetings this month.  Hohman will be at Old Woman Creek at noon today to discuss its quality and will cover Pipe Creek and Mills Creek in a meeting set for April 11 at Mr. Smith’s Coffee House in downtown Sandusky.  She said she’ll give detailed reports at both meetings on year-byyear water quality monitoring results.  Hohman is the watershed coordinator for Erie Soil and Water Conservation District.  The Mills Creek readings for 2014 showed the lowest water quality for the four streams Hohman monitors — the four also include Sawmill Creek — and in a Thursday interview, Hohman clarified her previous criticism of Bellevue’s wastewater treatment plant, which she believes produces much of the nitrogen and phosphorus nutrient load in Mills Creek. Those are the two major factors in creating harmful algal blooms, Hohman said.  Hohman’s March 25 release of stream monitoring data, which gave Mills Creek a “D” grade for water quality, prompted a public disagreement over what’s causing the high nutrient levels in the creek.  Hohman, citing readings taken from monitoring stations downstream from Bellevue and the fact levels were high during periods of low rainfall, said she believes Bellevue’s wastewater treatment plant is the main source.  Eric MacMichael, wastewater superintendent in Bellevue, disagreed, pointing out the plant’s phosphorus measurements improved in recent years. An Ohio EPA spokeswoman also said the plant had a good record in 2014.  Hohman said Thursday she agrees the plant has been doing much better in the past few years, and said water quality readings from Mills Creek bear that out.  “I see that there is a major improvement in the creek” she said.  There’s also something of an apple versus oranges element to the discussion, Hohman said. The Ohio EPA monitors the plant for overall phosphorus, but Hohman’s readings concentrate on dissolved reactive phosphorus, which is considered the main culprit for causing harmful algal blooms.  But Hohman added, “Something is entering the stream during non-storm events”  And she said it’s important to recognize that while agriculture is a huge component in fighting harmful algal blooms, Mills Creeks illustrates that farms are not the only source of nutrients. Readings also show septic tanks in Berlin Heights are a major source of nutrients in Old Woman Creek, she said.  Until now, the Ohio EPA has only monitored total phosphorus at wastewater treatment plants, said Heidi Griesmer, a spokeswoman for the Ohio EPA.

But under Senate Bill 1, which Ohio Gov. John Kasich signed Thursday, the Ohio EPA will monitor total phosphorus as well as dissolve reactive phosphorus for all wastewater treatment plants with a design flow of 1 million gallons a day or more, Griesmer said.  Bellevue has a 2.5 million gallons a day plant.

Want to go?

* WHAT: Brown bag lunch report on Old Woman Creek n WHEN: Noon today n WHERE: Old Woman Creek Reserve, 2514 Cleveland Road E., Huron
* WHAT: Mills Creek and Pipe Creek water quality report cards n WHEN: 10 a.m. April 11. n WHERE: Mr. Smith’s Coffee House, 140 Columbus Ave., in downtown Sandusky.