

Progress being made to improve city's drinking water

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 30 June 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 30 June 2010 11:52

Fixing the taste and odor problem of local residents' drinking water has been a top priority of city officials for quite some time. With the help of city department managers, an outside contractor and an oversight committee progress has been made.

Salem Mayor Dave Bower held a meeting at Salem City Hall June 21 to present the city's progress. Even though there is a noticeable improvement in the quality of water there are still additional improvements being planned and a regular maintenance schedule that needs to be established.

Nearly two years ago there was a noticeable taste and odor problem with local "tap water" and the mayor's office logged several calls daily from concerned residents. A local restaurant even chose to serve bottled water over tap water to their customers.

"Due to the large amount of calls our office received, we began formulating a plan that involved testing and treating the water at Lake John Hay and updating the water treatment facility at that location," said Bower.

The city contracted with Aquatic Control Incorporated to perform tests on the water at Lake John Hay. Those tests were conducted on March 15 and sent to Clemson University to be analyzed. Results from tests showed high geosmin levels were the cause of the unpleasant odor. More specifically, Planktothrix and Chrysochromulina, which are both types of plankton cells and in high amounts are known to cause taste and odor problems in water.

Tests also showed the best treatment would be to apply Algimycin to reduce geosmin levels. After application on May 4, lake water was tested one, seven and 14 days after treatment and results showed Planktothrix and Chrysochromulina levels were significantly reduced.

The call volume has decreased concerning complaints with drinking water and even a few thank you letters have been received thanking officials for the improvements made.

There were initial concerns that treatment of John Hay might cause a fish kill, but so far, that hasn't been an issue. In fact a local bass tournament held shortly after treatment had the best results ever since the tournament has been held there.

Aquatic control President David Isaacs stated in the meeting that regular scheduled maintenance is needed to maintain balanced levels of plankton in the lake water of John Hay because if left untreated, plankton levels can rise in a matter of days.

Regular lake water tests are being performed to establish a balanced treatment schedule. The city's Superintendent of Water Treatment Russell Brown stated in the meeting that as a result of the Algimycin treatments, fewer chemicals are being used to treat the water once it reaches the treatment facility. Another treatment of Algimycin is planned for July. In addition, the fire department has performed a system wide flush of the water system by

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flushing hydrants on June 21, 22, and 23 to eliminate pockets of old water that may remain in water lines.

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management is nearing the end of their process of approving plans for improvements needed at the treatment facility at John Hay. Once approval is received, the city will put the project up for bid to implement the improvements planned for the Lake John Hay treatment facility.