

ECOLOGY CENTER



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PRESS RELEASE

Local Residents, Public Officials, and Environmentalists Pack Public Hearing: Demand Changes to Gelman Sciences Groundwater Cleanup

Over 250 local residents, public officials, and environmentalists packed Abbott School on Ann Arbor's northwest side Monday night to demand changes to Gelman Sciences' (GSI) plans to clean up its enormous groundwater contamination site in Scio Township. The public hearing was held by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to solicit comments on GSI's plans to discharge polluted groundwater into a tributary of Honey Creek.

The Scio Residents for Safe Water (SRSW), a group of Scio Township neighbors near Honey Creek, delivered a two-hour presentation which proved that:

- water in Honey Creek flows into groundwater beneath the creek;
- residents in the area have no alternative to using drinking water wells;
- effective technology can reduce the pollution to non-detectable levels; and,
- state and federal law requires DEQ to force GSI to clean the groundwater fully before dumping it in Honey Creek.

The Scio Residents' presentation was delivered by experts in chemistry, toxicology, geology, engineering, and water quality issues.

Mike Garfield, Director of the Ecology Center, testified the Gelman proposal repeats a sorry history. From the late 1960s to early 1980s, the company disposed of 1,4-dioxane in lagoons behind their plant on Wagner Road. The State of Michigan permitted the procedure on the grounds that a hypothetical "protective clay layer" separated the surface from underlying groundwater. The pollutant leached through the soils into groundwater, and poisoned the drinking water wells of neighbors. Now, the company plans to pump the polluted groundwater into Honey Creek, and the State speculates that a "protective clay layer" between the Creek and the groundwater will protect wells. Garfield said that "the current hypothetical clay layer will protect neighbors' water no better than the earlier hypothetical clay layer."

Local governments unanimously oppose Gelman's plan. Last night, Washtenaw County Environmental Director Dr. Rebecca Head, City of Ann Arbor Assistant Administration Rob Bauman, and Scio Township Supervisor Bob Tickle each presented resolutions opposing the plan, which were passed unanimously by the municipalities.

Garfield continued that "Gelman Sciences is already treating the polluted groundwater to levels below 3 parts per billion on a small part of the site under the Evergreen subdivision in Ann Arbor. If they can do it at Evergreen, they can do it at the core." The "core area" is a 2-mile long complex of groundwater plumes polluted with levels of 1,4-dioxane as high as 20,000 parts per billion. Dioxane is a probable carcinogen which does not degrade in water, according to the EPA.

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