217/785-4787

March 17, 2008

Ms. Patricia Nomm, Director
Environmental Health
McHenry County Department of Health
2200 N. Seminary Avenue, Route 47 N.
Woodstock, Il 60098

Re: Port Barrington Groundwater Contamination

Dear Ms. Nomm:

The purpose of this letter is to respond to 3 questions and 1 request in your letter received on March 6, 2008.

This letter is a follow-up to the investigation that you have been conducting of private drinking water system wells in the River Walk Subdivision, Port Barrington, Mc Henry County, Illinois contaminated with acid blue dye #4. This investigation came to my attention in late November/early December of 2007. I contacted the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDA) representative on the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Groundwater in early December 2007 to request investigation of aquatic pesticide application in this area. In addition, you have provided me with copies of all of the sampling results used to delineate the extent of contamination. Furthermore, we have had several discussions about this data and what it means in relation to regional hydrogeologic flow information. Additionally, I received a copy of the letter from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) sent to you in February 2008, that recommended treatment of the private water supplies or connection to community water supply due to the:

1. Apparent hydraulic connection between surface and groundwater; and
2. Inability to predict the future microbiological or chemical quality of those water supplies.

Given this background, the following provides responses to your questions and request:

First, you asked if, based on the available data, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) can make a determination as to the area that may be impacted by groundwater under the influence of surface water. I would be very hesitant to make this final scientific determination, based on existing data, due to the possible potential public health implications;

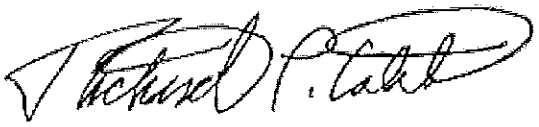
Secondly, you asked if the Illinois EPA could conduct a study to determine flow directions if we could not make an assessment based on existing data. In this case, the IDA is the lead regulatory agency investigating the source of contamination, and our purview is limited. Thus, whatever, the outcome of the investigation, I recommend that the: State Scientific Surveys; United States Geological Survey; or a private consulting firm be utilized to conduct site specific work to determine groundwater flow and the fate and transport of contaminants;

Third, you asked what recommendations/restrictions can be made regarding the addition of chemicals to the ponds in the River Walk Subdivision. The IDA has been investigating if the aquatic pesticide was applied within the legal application rates. I have also asked IDA (March 14, 2008) if a special restriction area can be established if it is determined that the aquatic pesticide was applied within regulatory limits; and

Lastly, you requested that I or one of my staff participate in a meeting with representatives from the County Health Department, IDPH, IDA, Village of Port Barrington, and the River Walk Homeowner's Association to relay the findings of the investigation, recommendations, and discuss future actions. I would be more than willing to participate in such a meeting. If I am not available I will send one of my staff.

I trust that this will meet your needs. Please contact me at the number provided below or e-mail me at rick.cobb@illinois.gov if you have any other questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Richard P. Cobb, P.G.
Deputy Manager
Division of Public Water Supplies