

Letters to

Pollution

9/29/64

To the Editor of The Banner:-

It was with considerable interest that I read your front page article on Sept. 23 concerning the continued pollution of the Walloomsac River by the Vermont Tissue Mill.

I was especially interested in the concluding paragraph and would like to take serious issue with it. This stated that "the pollution problem is essentially only that of the river's unsightly appearance. The waste material itself is of an inorganic nature which does not seriously injure the streams (sic) properties of purity and oxygen content." The very unsightliness in itself is ample cause for objection but, if you or the Water Resources Board sincerely believe that the fine clay suspension does no damage to the ecology and biological productivity of the stream you are sorely mistaken.

All one needs to do is to walk along the stream and observe the condition of the bottom. There are very few places where there are any algae or aquatic plants showing a thriving growth. These plants are essential for the maintenance of a healthy ecological environment. Furthermore, their absence prevents or interrupts entire food cycles. Insect larvae, small fish, minnows and other important links in the cycles cannot survive or are seriously depleted. This situation exists for a considerable distance below the effluent of the Vermont Tissue Mill and probably extends into the state of New York. The situation of the fine silt which, granted, does not of itself change the oxygen content of the stream creates an intolerable condition in so far as the biology of the stream is concerned.

Don't lose sight of the fact that a fine clay silt is the equivalent of a fine dust in the atmosphere and that one should keep the example of the "Dust Bowl" of the southwest in mind for comparison purposes. There too, the dust did not alter the oxygen content of the atmosphere but organisms from all types of ecological niches were suffocated by the dense layers of the deposit.

I feel that, since this may

well involve more than one state, federal fisheries biologists should be consulted, or at least the burden of proof of no damage lies with the Vermont Tissue Mill. I, personally, feel that the present eyesore is damage enough, but also feel that the stream is seriously damaged in a biological sense and may well be practically sterile, ecologically speaking, for a considerable distance below the Mill's effluence.

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