

**For Immediate Release:**

**March 19, 2008**

**From: The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

**Contact: Rebecca Burns, Director of Environmental Health 269-273-2161 Ext. 228**

**Sewer Overflow Impacts White Pigeon River and St. Joseph River in Michigan and Indiana**

*“No Contact” Health Advisory Issued*

**St. Joseph County, Michigan:**

The White Pigeon Sanitary System has reported a sewer overflow from a broken sewer main into the flooded White Pigeon River south of the Village of White Pigeon at the Kalamazoo Street bridge. A discharge of approximately 30,000 gallons of untreated sewage occurred between 12:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 18, 2008. The White Pigeon Sanitary System staff has already repaired the damaged main. As a result of this spill, the White Pigeon Sanitary System in cooperation with the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency (CHA) has sampled water from the river downstream from the discharge. Initial test results show a slightly elevated level of fecal coliform. Clean-up is ongoing at the site. Additional samples will be taken, as necessary, to determine when the level has returned to a normal range.

**Action taken.** As a precaution, and in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the CHA has issued a five-day no-contact advisory for all of the White Pigeon River from the spill location to the St. Joseph River. The public is advised to avoid contact with water in the area until Monday, March 24, 2008. This advisory includes any body contact with the river for swimming, fishing, or boating.

Numerous infectious diseases are associated with contact with fecal coliform and this advisory has been issued as a precautionary measure to protect the public's health.

**Future Action.** Further notification will be made if high levels of bacterial contamination are discovered, and health officials in Indiana, downstream from the discharge, have already been notified. The CHA is currently notifying local newspapers, radio stations and providing information via the internet to get the word out to citizens as rapidly as possible about this advisory. The health agency will continue to monitor this situation until conditions return to normal.

This release as well as a **frequently Asked Questions** guide regarding fecal coliform will be posted on the CHA website at:

[www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org)