

Meeting Raises Fish-Kill Concerns

BY CAROL SIMMONS

Riverwood News Staff Reporter

More than 300 concerned citizens, many prepared with questions, attended a Riverwood Town Hall public meeting last evening to hear from scientists investigating the Snake River fish kill.

Dr. Harold Schmidt, a chemist with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), expressed regret that the fishing tournament was canceled, but he strongly supported the town council's decision, saying it was the safest course in the long run. He reported that his laboratory is still conducting tests on the river water.

Dr. Margaret Brooke, a State University water specialist, helped interpret information and answered questions. Local physician Dr. Jason Martingdale and Riverwood High School family and consumer sciences teacher Alicia Green joined the speakers for a question-and-answer session.

Brooke confirmed that preliminary water-sample analyses showed no likely cause for the fish kill. She reported that EPA chemists will collect water samples at hourly intervals today to look for any unusual fluctuations in dissolved-oxygen (DO) levels. Fish require an adequate amount of oxygen gas dissolved in water for their survival; unusual DO levels sometimes kill fish.

Concerning possible fish-kill causes, Brooke said that EPA scientists have been

unable to identify any microorganisms in the fish that could have been responsible for their death. She concluded that "it must have been something dissolved or temporarily suspended in the water." If dissolved matter were involved, EPA chemists will have to consider the relative amounts of various substances that can dissolve in water, and the effect of water temperature on their solubility. Brooke expressed confidence that further studies would shed more light on the causes of the problem.

Dr. Martingdale reassured citizens that "thus far, no illness reported by either physicians or the hospital can be linked to drinking water." Ms. Green offered water-conservation tips for housekeeping and cooking to make life easier for inconvenienced citizens. The information sheet she distributed is available on the Riverwood city Web site.

Mayor Cisco confirmed that water supplies will again be trucked in from Mapleton today, and he expressed hope that the crisis will last no longer than three days.

Those attending the meeting appeared to accept the emergency situation with good spirits. "I'll never take tap water for granted again," said Trudy Anderson, a Riverwood resident. "I thought scientists would have the answers," puzzled Robert Morgan, head of Morgan Enterprises. "They don't know either! There's certainly more involved in all this than I ever imagined."