

Rally organizers say:

Billions of fish die in Bayshore intake

By J. Patrick Eaken
Press Staff Writer
news@presspublications.com

The Western Lake Erie Waterkeeper Association is trying to save 46 million fish caught on intake screens and 2½ billion fish that go through screens from being killed.

Western Lake Erie Basin head water keeper Sandy Bihn says 2005-06 studies compared to the 1976-77 period show nearly eight times as many larval fish killed over the 1970s reports. Bihn, who claims to have been working on finding ways to reduce the fish kill for about five years, says this is the first report done since 1977.

FirstEnergy communications director Mark Durbin said the Ohio EPA requested his company conduct the study. The 163-page FirstEnergy impingement/entrainment report was completed by Kinectric.

“Right now, we’re still working on the study as well. Keep in mind that one

of the takeaways is there are a variety of factors that affect the lake in any given year. It’s just a slice in time as to when that was done,” Durbin said.

Two weeks ago, the WLEWA held its Third Annual Rally to Save the Fish near the Bayshore FirstEnergy power plant in East Toledo off the shores of Lake Erie.

WLEWA members took a boat from the marina at Maumee Bay State Park and went to the Bayshore FirstEnergy intake. There also was a shore rally at the white building west of the plant at 4701 Bayshore Road soon afterward.

The rally organizers say the Bayshore FirstEnergy power plant draws 650 million gallons of water a day. At this time of the year, they say the power plant draws much of the Maumee River thru its intake. Bihn further alleges that it “appears to be the largest fish killing power plant in the Great Lakes.”

“That’s just because of its physical location at the Maumee River. They’ve reported for two years that several months a year 100 percent of the river

goes through the plant,” Bihn said.

“It tends to be in the fall where we get more of the small, juvenile, larval fish. Nevertheless, these are massive, massive numbers of fish being killed in that plant and it obviously affects the food chain for the fish with the emerald shiners and the others that go up the food chain.

“It’s disturbing to know that through all these years all these fish have been killed and nothing has been reported and nothing has been done.

“It’s also true that individuals — sports fisherman, charter boat people, commercial boat people all have limits on how much fish they can catch to protect the resource. In this case, there is no protection, there is nothing given back, and they pay nothing for the resources they kill.

“Many people ask where the dead fish go. We suspect they are either incinerated or land-filled, but the company simply doesn’t tell anyone.”

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Bihn said fish kills at intake-valves in City of Toledo and Oregon water treatment facilities are minor compared to kills at the FirstEnergy plant.

“It shows massive amounts of fish kills. Much more than they did in the 70s and were reported in the 70s,” says Bihn.

“We think that some of the reasons for the increase in the fish are improved water quality and lower lake levels. The channel where they go in is shallower and then part of the area where they go in has been enclosed by Facility 3 that confines the dredge facility,” Bihn continues. “The rules require that they reduce the fish kills.”

Durbin said the study “still shows a very vibrant population of lots of different fish. We’re not saying there isn’t some impact, but we think there is the ability to co-exist there.”

Durbin continued, “Sandy, and the others are obviously focused on one issue, but the region has any number of issues that they need to address as far as power, the lake, resources, and tax dollars. We’re not discounting (the study) at all, but there is a lot to it.

Cooling tower

Bihn suggests installing a cooling tower at the Bayshore plant much like Davis Besse and Enrico Fermi nuclear power plants have.

At Bayshore, the environmentalists say, the water that goes through the power plant and is heated 5 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit, which fosters more algae and keeps the shoreline from freezing in the winter.

“One of the solutions they are proposing is to try and put something at the opening of the channel to try and divert the fish from going into the channel, and to confine them to a disposal facility and some other kinds of in-betweens,” Bihn said. “The best way to get this reduced is for a cooling tower. That’s what they should do here.”



BAYSHORE PLANT FISH STUDY

CAUGHT AGAINST SCREENS

- 46 million fish
- 24 million emerald shiners
- 14 million gizzard shad
- 4.7 million white perch
- 1.6 million white bass
- 123,405 yellow perch
- 77,812 walleye
- 4,445 small mouth bass
- That amounts to 1 million pounds

OF ONE MILLION POUNDS CAUGHT

- 725,058 pounds forage fish - gizzard shad and emerald shiners (fish that walleye, yellow perch and bass eat)
- 116,141 pounds white perch
- 57,322 pounds walleye

- 31,294 pounds sheepshead
- 8,181 pounds white bass
- 5,815 pounds yellow perch
- 3,864 pounds catfish.

2.2 BILLION WENT THROUGH SCREENS

- Most were sheepsheads (977 million)
- 656 million rainbow smelt
- 19 million emerald shiners
- 14 million walleye
- 4 million yellow perch
- 17 million white bass.

SOURCE: Kenetric Study on impinged/entrained fish at Bayshore Plant requested by First Energy/Ohio EPA over 16 month period (2005-06)

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Durbin says FirstEnergy is studying a number of possibilities to deal with impingement/entrainment issues. He said a fish diversion plan and the cooling tower are both options First Energy is looking at. He calls the cooling tower “possible, but not probable.”

“It’s an expensive proposition, and quite frankly I think there are some issues with cooling towers as well as far as the aquatics, so there is no easy solu-

tion,” Durbin said.

“There obviously are any number of variables that come into play. (Bihn) has her opinions, we have ours. The business community and folks are dependent on the electricity being produced in a cost-effective way. Those are all issues that you’ve got to look at the big picture, and that is what the EPA is trying to do as far as permitting and what they could require for us down the road to do.”

Durbin says the Federal EPA may also make some rulings, but a federal appeals court may have some say in pending cases as well.

“It’s all about striking a balance,” Durbin said. “It’s not just FirstEnergy, it’s any utility. There are some environmental impacts on fish population, but there are also impacts on the electricity that’s provided for our society and the benefits that brings.”