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Crews work to pump contaminated water from the west branch of Panther Creek Friday afternoon. The creek was dammed by Woodford County Emergency Management officials on Sunday after swine waste in the creek killed nearly 30,000 fish.

Hog manure causes fish kill near Roanoke

August 17, 2013 at 10:11 AM

LAURA NIGHTENGALE
 Peoria Journal Star

ROANOKE - Crews continued to work Friday afternoon to pump contaminated water from Panther Creek near Roanoke after a swine waste concentration caused a fishkill in a 4 1/2-mile stretch.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency determined that the cause of the contamination was a fertilizer sprayer that malfunctioned and piled a large amount of hog manure in one location, which eventually drained into the west branch of Panther Creek.

On Thursday, IEPA director Lisa Bonnett asked the Illinois Attorney General's office to pursue enforcement against the owner of Meadow Lane Farms, a 7,200-head capacity hog farm southwest of Roanoke.

The IEPA called for Meadow Lane Farms to clean up the affected area at the farm and requested that a civil penalty be sought in the

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case.

Preliminary investigations by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources fisheries division estimated that nearly 30,000 fish, insects and other wildlife were killed by the manure contamination, accounting for 21 species. The replacement value of the wildlife was estimated at just more than \$5,000.

A representative of the Illinois Conservation Police said the farm owner was cooperative with all agencies throughout the investigation.

"There was no willful intent on the landowner at all. ... He's doing everything he possibly do to help," regional commander Bob Frazier said.

Friends and family of Meadow Lane Farms turned out to help pump several feet of contaminated water out of 4 miles of Panther Creek into trucks, which then delivered the diluted fertilizer to farmlands in the area.

"We feel terrible about it," Meadow Lane Farms owner Mark Schmidgall said. "We regret that it happened, and we're doing everything, as people can probably tell, and working very closely with the EPA to get it all cleaned up."

Laura Nightengale can be reached at 686-3181 or lnightengale@pjstar.com . Follow her on Twitter @lauranight.

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