



PHOTO TOP LEFT: JEFFREY HARRIS; TOP RIGHT: JEFFREY HARRIS; BOTTOM LEFT: JEFFREY HARRIS; BOTTOM RIGHT: JEFFREY HARRIS

MYSTERIOUS FLOW ON THE MIDDLE FORK

BY ANDREW HARRIS

On April 26th, volunteers and middle school students around the Middle Fork ran an educational field day when they worked something out of place. One of the small tributaries to the Middle Fork was flowing fast and thick with milky white sediment. Upstream, the water was perfectly clear, but downstream, the water was cloudy and opaque. One source was blamed for "like a comet, the silty water was completely mixed with the main stream and the water

Middle Fork was opaque from the light grey suspended load from the tributary."

That same day, Wilson also noticed a small stream near the above-mentioned flow back to back with cloudy white water. Both the Wilson and the source stream noted that the color and flow rate of the stream was unusual and nothing was your typical brown sediment runoff but cloudy white, and flowing fast. These had not been any side to cause a flow like that.

The white and cloudy silty water came from the area of the adjacent image. Following the valley southeast to Dymally's property line, Wilson identified it as the source that water from Dymally's dam.

The source reported the upstream discharge to FERN. We reached out to Illinois EPA to see if they would investigate.

The day after the event, Illinois EPA spoke with witnesses near the site but found nothing that could have caused the upstream flow. They did not investigate Dymally's property, but Dymally informed via phone that they did not see anything unusual.

Two weeks later, Illinois EPA met with Dymally for a follow-up inspection. At that time, Dymally confirmed that they were responsible for the event,

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releasing millions of gallons, but they could not explain its cloudy white color. Illinois EPA explored portions of the site downstream of the dam but were not able to locate a source for the discharge. They concluded that the white silt would most likely have come from Dymally's dam.

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

In the Illinois EPA inspection report, Dymally indicates that construction on a nearby inspection of the Vandalia River basin caused a large dam blocking the spillway on April 26th, the day before the upstream flow. The same day, another contractor caused the large dam, causing a flow over the spillway approximately 2 inches deep which lasted for hours.

The main cause is not clear. The main nearby dam was the lake level was lowered by 2 inches, and the lake is approximately 170 acres, so the volume that was over the spillway (area x depth x volume) would be the volume of water released and the timing from the stream gap event downstream.

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