

## **Presentation to Discuss the Causes of Algae in Saginaw Bay**

The Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative, through the Department of Environmental Quality, Save Our Shorelines, and Senator Jim Barcia hosted a public presentation on the causes of algae in Saginaw Bay. The meeting was presented as part of the Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative with the goal of helping area residents better understand the various causes of algae levels being seen in Saginaw Bay.

Juli Dyble, a biologist with the NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, gave her science-based presentation on November 30, at Caseville High School.

In summary, zebra mussels have increased the growth of bottom dwelling plants and when there are temperature changes these plants die-off, release from the bottom and wash ashore to become muck. The invasive zebra mussels filter out the floating plant matter in the Saginaw Bay and allow sunlight to penetrate to the bottom of the shallow inner bay. The zebra mussels provide a great place for the bottom dwelling plants to attach and the mussels feed the plants a healthy diet of nutrients from their waste products, allowing for phenomenal growth.

The meeting attendees asked questions and made statements at the meeting addressing the following issues:

- There is need for *E. coli* monitoring to determine the source(s) of the muck and to identify potential human health risks associated with contact with the muck.
- There are significant economic concerns related to property taxes - loss of value due to the muck.
- There are concerns related to tiling of agricultural fields and possible pathway for pollution from manure applications.
- There is need to identify acceptable methods to remove the muck from the shores and provide disposal options.
- There is need for improved coordination between DEQ and the Corps of Engineers related to dredge disposal (Pigeon River example).

The Department of Environmental Quality staff provided the following information:

- The Department has developed a Science Committee to identify health related risks and monitoring issues associated with the muck. The Science Committee will be headed by Dr. Joan Rose, Michigan State University.
- DEQ will coordinate with Corps on these muck and dredge related issues.
- DEQ will continue the discussions with everyone concerned and will work together to solve the issues associated with the muck. This effort will be through the Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative.

More information on the on-going efforts of the Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative is available at <http://www.michigan.gov/deq>, under "Issues to Watch."