

# The dog detectives

By LOUISE WREGG - HP Staff Writer | Posted: Friday, July 15, 2016 6:00 am

BRIDGMAN — The search for how human waste is ending up in Lake Michigan got a little help this week from two four-legged “detectives.”

Kenna, a golden retriever, and Sable, a German shepherd mix, from Environmental Canine Services in East Lansing and Maine are sniffing out the sources of the waste in several small streams between Stevensville and the Indiana line.

Human waste getting into Lake Michigan causes beaches to be closed due to high E. coli counts, said Marcy Hamilton, senior planner with the planning commission. She said the main sources are usually failing septic systems or broken sewer pipes.

She said of the 18 water samples sent to the dogs in East Lansing a few weeks ago, six came back positive for human waste. She said the next step is to bring the dogs to the site to try to track down the specific sources.

Peg Kohring, midwest regional manager of The Conservation Fund, said she has been looking for the sources of human waste in natural waterways since 2001. She said she has worked with the dogs before. She said you can’t tell if water has human waste just by looking at it.

“You can’t see it. ... I’ve walked those creeks many times looking, didn’t see anything, and then this dog, Sable, just came and nailed it,” she said.

Kohring said Sable found that pipe under a bunch of leaves that no one else had seen.

“It’s faster. It’s much cheaper than water sampling. We can go right to the source,” she said.

Of the 12 beaches south of Stevensville, Kohring said five of them have been having problems with high E. coli counts.

Karen Reynolds, president and owner of Environmental Canine Services, said she and her husband started the company in the Lansing area in 2009 and moved the headquarters to the east coast a couple of years ago. She said they have headquarters in Maine, but still have dog teams in the Lansing area. In addition, she said they have dog teams in California.

She said her dog, Sable, alerts to the presence of human waste by barking. She said Kenna, who is handled



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Dogs Kenna, left, and Sable from Environmental Canine Services use their noses in Bridgman on Monday to find where human waste is entering a tributary that flows into Lake Michigan. The dogs will be in the area all week looking for human waste between Stevensville and the state line with Indiana. They were hired by the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission in Benton Harbor.

by Laura Symonds of East Lansing, alerts by sitting down.

Reynolds said they moved the headquarters to the east coast because the infrastructure is older and there are a lot more failing septic and sewer systems.

Hamilton said the planning commission is studying 11 small streams that flow into Lake Michigan that are not part of a larger watershed plan. The study is funded by a \$472,185 state grant. She said they are creating the Lake Michigan Tributaries Watershed Management Plan.

The total for the project is \$524,650, which includes \$50,000 from the Pokagon Fund and other donations.

Hamilton said anyone who suspects there is a problem with a sewer pipe or a septic system can call the Berrien County Health Department at 926-7121 to report it.

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