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CLERK'S OFFICE

JUN 23 2010

STATE OF ILLINOIS
Pollution Control Board

Dear Sir or Madam,

ROS-9 A+B
Act# 301

I am writing to ask you to support the disinfection of Chicago area waterways as a high school rower who spends nearly two hours every day practicing on the main branch of the Chicago River. Disinfection is an unbelievably crucial environmental option that would dramatically improve the quality of the river for myself and for all others who row, kayak, canoe, fish, or participate in a river related activity.

I am a member of Lincoln Park Juniors, a club rowing team which operates out of the back channel of the river, by Goose Island. My teammates and I are 13-18 year old boys and girls from many different high schools around the Chicago area who make the commute from our respective schools every single day at three. Rain or shine, we practice on the river year round, six days a week for three hours. In the winter, we move indoors and train on rowing machines but this is nothing compared to the excitement we experience racing on the river. This dedication has won us many championships in the Midwest and we are currently ranked tenth in the nation for our women's squad. Every day we make physical and emotional sacrifices to train harder and improve, and as a result, have benefited from this transformative sport that many people have never heard of. We are not the only team to use the river, and high school crews from St. Ignatius, Loyola Academy, New Trier, as well as several college programs also suffer from the negative effects of the pollution in the river. However, we are unique in that Lincoln Park is the only team that practices under the shadows of the skyscrapers, and races directly through the Loop in the very heart of the city.

I would like you to consider the request to disinfect the Chicago River simply because the bacteria from human sewage that seeps into its waters are harmful to all of the Chicagoans who use the river. When a non-river user thinks of boaters who use the Chicago River, the occasional lone kayaker comes to mind, and therefore this factor becomes less of an issue. However, Chicago's commuters who walk the bridges above the river in the Loop see us practicing and know that there are over 80 rowers who dedicate over 15 hours of their week to racing up and down that stretch of water. And we are not alone. Over 20,000 canoeists and kayakers paddled down the Chicago river in the summer of 2009 and aside from boaters, the number of public contact points to the Chicago river are numerous and readily available to the many Chicago residents who access the water. Thousands of people come in contact with the river every day despite risking disease and without disinfection, thousands more cannot fully experience the many benefits that the river offers.

Some may argue that disinfection is unnecessary simply because no one ever comes in close contact with the water. This is completely false, as anyone who regularly uses the river would know. As a rower, I am soaked by river water every day, whether it is a splash from a paddle in my eyes or a full drenching from the wake of a barge or police boat. In order to get a quick "catch" of the oar in the water, backsplash naturally occurs, saturating each rower with water from the oar of the teammate in front of them. Other users of the river come in contact with the water from lifting boats in and out, wading, or even by falling in. This water only becomes a problem when one thinks of the many pathogens that thrive in it, including Salmonella, Hepatitis A, and E. coli, which

threatens each and every user of the river with the potential of acute respiratory illnesses, diarrhea, meningitis, gastroenteritis and countless other diseases. As a student athlete representing the city of Chicago I believe that it is wrong to subject the users of this river to the threat of disease simply because of the false belief that the river is clean enough or that disinfection won't make a difference to the level of pollution in the river. Disinfection is a standard practice employed in every major U.S. city and is a small price to pay for a crucial and potentially life-altering difference for the thousands of people of all ages that enjoy the use of our city's river.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read this letter. The decision to disinfect the river is a small step on the way to a cleaner earth, but will make a dramatic difference in the lives of the thousands of Chicagoans that take pleasure in its waters. The river, once an impressive engineering feat of young, tenacious Chicago, has become polluted and its value is not equal to bodies of water such as our Great Lakes in many eyes. Yet, for me, the river has been an opportunity to experience the joy and simple wonder that comes from pushing yourself to what you believed was your limit and going beyond that, every day, the hallmark of the sport of rowing. Without that muddy river, Chicago's young rowers cannot go on to win championships, to be recruited to row in college, to become Olympians, and most importantly, to grow and mature as individuals, understanding that you cannot win a race without the perfect synchronization and determination that comes from every individual in a boat working together to achieve the impossible. Disinfection would protect the health and well-being of everyone who spends time using the river by the simple procedure of killing the pathogens and bacteria from human sewage and is a necessary procedure in a modern age where the river, which was once simply traversed by barge traffic, can be utilized and enjoyed by all Chicagoans.

Sincerely,

Abigail Lantz