

## **Turtle trouble: Abnormalities in aquatic life a warning sign?**

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A national media report has put the spotlight on pollution problems plaguing area waterways.

The Global and Mail recently reported a study of wildlife on the Great Lakes has found sexual abnormalities in male snapping turtles. This includes diminished penis size and some male turtles having the ability to produce egg yolk protein, which is normally something only females can do. Wheatley Harbour, the St. Clair River near Sarnia and the Detroit River near Windsor are three areas where biologists with the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada have identified this problem. Researchers were also unable to find any signs of reproductive activity with turtles in the Wheatley area.

These findings are something Ontarians should be concerned about, said Anne Mitchell, executive director of the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP).

"Eventually, it will be people who have these abnormalities," Mitchell said. "I think the

issue we have to grapple with is the fact our way of living and our lifestyle...

we are destroying the systems that we need to support us, like air and water and clean land."

Emissions from industry and run-off from farms have long been targeted as sources of pollution.

However, Mitchell said one of the main ways hazardous waste is disposed of is ordinary Ontarians dumping it down their drains.

"We all have to really change our habits," Mitchell said.

"It's unfortunate, but there may have to be another Walkerton (incident) before we get more people's attention," she said.

Chatham-Kent Essex MP Jerry Pickard believes a lot of progress has been made over the past several decades in curbing the amount of pollutants that get into the Great Lakes.

"The turtles could be a sign of a problem and a sign we need to pay more attention to the problem that is there," said Pickard. "I don't think we need to overreact. We need to have a continuum of practices and policies and information to keep on the right track."