

Storm created a sewer crisis

Lake Crabtree swamps system

From Staff Reports

CARY - Lake Crabtree is draining into the town's sewer system, overwhelming machinery and sending about 500,000 gallons a day of lake water and untreated sewage into Crabtree Creek.

Blame Tropical Storm Alberto, said Rob Bonne, Cary's utilities director. The rain appears to have broken open a pipe or dislodged a manhole near the lake, according to Bonne, allowing lake water to pour in to the town's sewer pipes at a rate of more than 11 million gallons a day.

Town employees in canoes and waders have been looking for the break since Thursday morning without success. They will keep up the search through the weekend, according to a town spokeswoman, and stop only when they find it.

Or when daylight runs out. After dark, "We don't think it's safe to have people out in canoes with the snakes and everything," Bonne said.

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The leak is huge. Live fish are being sucked into the North Cary sewage treatment plant from the lake.

Since the leak, the plant has gone from treating about 6 million gallons of wastewater a day to more than 17 million gallons a day. The plant's pumps cannot handle all the water, and are spilling an estimated 500,000 gallons a day.

The stuff spilling into Crabtree Creek is not all toilet paper and human waste, said Bonne. Mostly, it's lake water

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