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NEWS RELEASE

CITY OF DAWSONVILLE

On the morning of Thursday, March 22nd, City Utility Department personnel noticed discolored water in Flat Creek. On closer examination, they noticed some dead fish and other aquatic life. They immediately contacted Environmental Management Services the City's contracted company for environmental testing services. City personnel also walked all sewage lines to make sure there were no leaks or damaged piping. They found no problems of any sort with the City's sewage infrastructure.

Upon arrival, Environmental Management Services began inspecting and performing testing of the creek and drainages above and below the discovery point. A PH test at the discovery site showed a 1 which is very acidic. The Tuesday before this discovery, during routine testing at the same site by Environmental Management Services, the PH had been between 5.5 and 6.5, which is the normal range. Environmental Management Services contacted the Georgia Department of Natural Resources who deployed both Fishery Biologist of the Wildlife Resources Division to the scene as well a representative of the Environmental Protection Division Hazardous Response Team.

The contamination was traced back to the source just below a Gold Creek Foods retention pond. DNR personnel made contact with Gold Creek Foods personnel who advised that on Tuesday, March 20th, between 2 and 5:00 AM, workers had accidentally ruptured a 55-gallon drum of Ferric Chloride, which somehow bypassed their retention pond flowing into the drainage behind Robinson Elementary School. This drainage flows downstream into Flat Creek. DNR personnel have this incident under investigation.

Environmental Management Services has assured the City that there is no risk to drinking water. The Board of Education was also on the scene and based on recommendations from Environmental Services Management, they decided that it was safe for children at Robinson Elementary School but they will be kept off the playground to ensure no one gets access to the creek. City personnel notified Dawson County EMS/Fire Chief Lanier Swafford, who was to notify GEMA. City personnel notified County Manager David Headley, Etowah Water Sewer Authority Director Brooke Anderson, along with the Board of Education. Additionally, a call was placed to Dawson County Environmental Health Manager Bill Ringle and EPD Hazardous Response Team reached out to the State of Georgia Public Health Department emergency personnel.

Gold Creek Foods at the direction of EPD Hazardous Response Team personnel, began clean-up efforts utilizing Hulsey Environmental Services beginning Thursday evening. Ferric chloride by nature is heavier than water and settles to the bottom of pools in the stream. As water increases such as from rainfall, the chemical can be washed further downstream.

Citizens should use caution and refrain from contact with stream water along Flat Creek and prohibit livestock from drinking. Should anyone have questions, they should call DNR Public Information Officer Kevin Chambers at 404-651-7970.