

# Candlewick plant started without permit

■ **Fines possible:** Consumers Illinois Water Co. officials say they started without EPA approval because they couldn't endure any more delays.

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The Register Star

POPLAR GROVE —  
Frustrated by bureaucracy and

## BOONE COUNTY

delays, Candlewick Lake's utility company has started construction of its controversial new sewage treatment plant without a required permit from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

Consumers Illinois Water Co. officials acknowledged they might be acting illegally, but they said months of delays in the permitting process forced them to move unilaterally. The new plant will

replace an overloaded plant that is contributing to a water pollution problem at Candlewick.

"It's not an act of defiance," said company president Chuck Smith. "It's a good-faith effort on our part to correct the problem."

A convoy of trucks Thursday delivered tons of concrete through a back entrance at Candlewick for the estimated \$4 million plant's foundation.

EPA officials said they were unaware that ground had been

broken on the project. They said Consumers could face fines totaling \$50,000, plus an additional \$10,000 each day that construction continues without a state permit.

Dennis Connor, an EPA inspector in Rockford, said the utility company apparently has decided that getting fined for unauthorized construction is "the lesser of two evils" compared with the water pollution problem — a situation that has worsened as

Candlewick has grown.

The state could seek a court order halting the plant construction, but Connor said that is not likely.

"I'm not sure that that would serve any purpose," he said. "We want to see the pollution stopped."

The Illinois attorney general's office already is preparing a lawsuit against Consumers because of alleged violations of state pollution standards for wastewater being dumped in Candlewick's

private lake by the existing 20-year-old wastewater treatment plant.

Candlewick residents and Boone County authorities have criticized Consumers for not building a new plant sooner. Under pressure to move quickly, the company has pledged to have the new facility semi-operational

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