

On the hunt for diesel dumpers

## Town offers reward for info on who dumped fuel

By **BEN FINLEY**  
STAFF WRITER

*Ben Finley can be reached at 215-949-4203 or .*

Is somebody really that lazy? Well, that and a lack of conscience are the theories that Middletown officials have for why someone is dumping diesel fuel or home heating oil into a storm sewer flowing into Queen Anne Creek. Middletown is offering up \$500 for information resulting in the arrest and conviction of anyone who's been illegally dumping waste fuel, Fire Marshal Jim McGuire said Tuesday.

Since mid-January, an estimated 15 gallons of some kind of petroleum product has periodically gone through a storm drain into the creek. That drain is located on Queen Lily Road in the Quincy Hollow section of Levittown in Middletown and pours from a drain pipe into the creek, McGuire said.

Anyone with information regarding the dumping is asked to call 215-750-3812.

What has officials especially frustrated is the fact that it's pretty easy to safely dispose of this stuff. Waste oil can be dropped off for free at dozens of locations throughout the county, Middletown Supervisor Chuck Thompson explained. To find out where, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Web site at .

"Some people don't have any conscience," Thompson said.

The repeated spills have caused environmental damage in and around the creek and sucked up significant township resources and \$1,500 in taxpayer money, McGuire said.

Fire crews have been sopping up the spills with booms, which trap oil and absorb it from the creek water. Officials also ran cameras in the sewers to find which drain the pollution was coming from. And officials have been going door to door trying to track down the problem, asking homeowners if their home heating oil tanks have been leaking, McGuire said.

But so far, township officials think someone is dumping the stuff in the sewer.

"Hopefully, a neighbor or someone has seen it happen," McGuire said. "You would think people would know better. And whether they know it's right or not, it's still a crime."

Illegal dumping is a summary offense punishable by up to 90 days in prison and a \$300 fine, according to the Pennsylvania Crimes Code. Further legal action could be taken through the federal Clean Streams Act as well as a township ordinance, McGuire said.

The Department of Environmental Protection is involved, testing the soil around the creek for contamination, DEP spokeswoman Deborah Fries said. The Bucks County Department of Health is also involved in the investigation.

Queen Anne Creek flows from Queen Anne Lake near the Oxford Valley Mall in Middletown, through the township and into Mill Creek in Bristol Township, where it eventually spills into the Neshaminy Creek, a large waterway that flows into the Delaware River.

Among other things, the waste oil that's flowing into the creek decreases the oxygen in the water, hurting plant and animal life, McGuire said.





Ken Richards and Scott Hoagland of the Middletown fire marshal's office wrestle with a boom used to soak up oil Tuesday in the Queen Anne Creek. Middletown Fire Marshal Jim McGuire is offering a \$500 reward to any information leading to the arrest and conviction of those who are polluting the creek with petroleum products. KIM WEIMER / **STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**