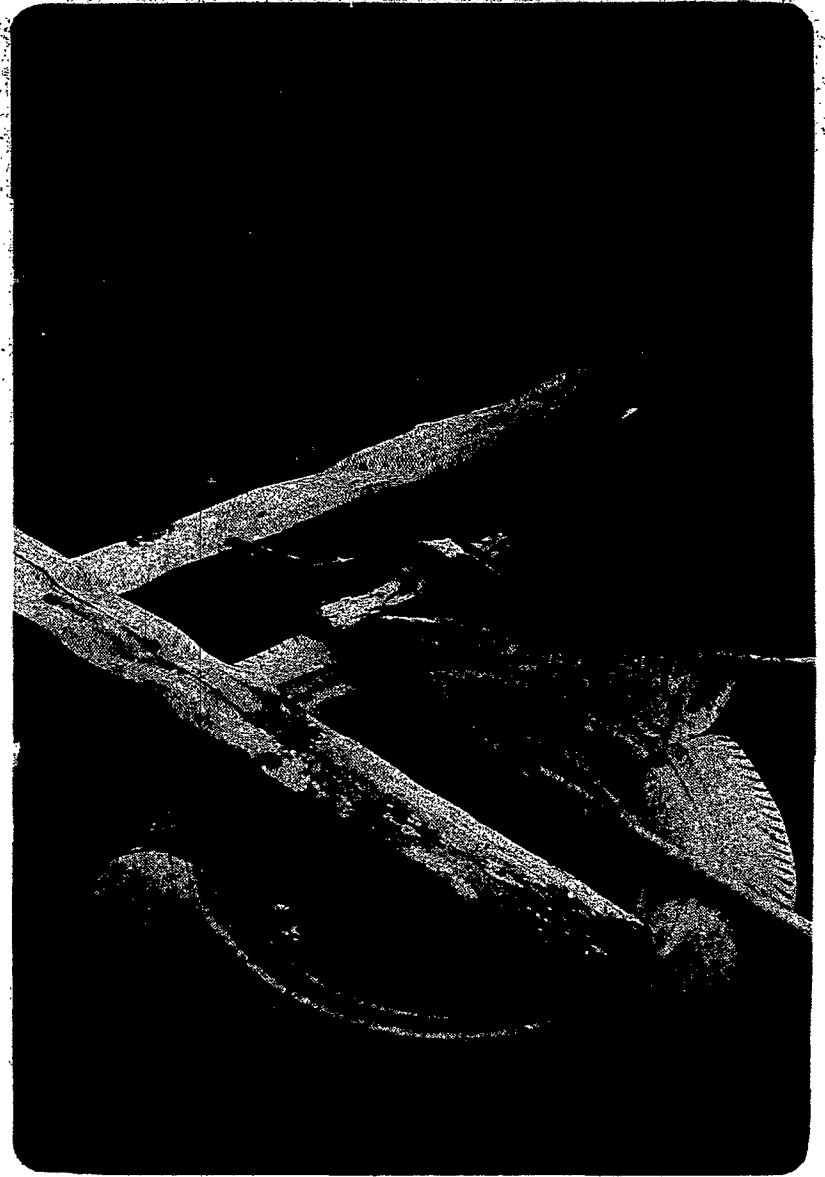




Research goes on in the most overgrown areas.



Typical inspection site, above, Mill Creek in Webster is choked with debris. Less visible, until a chemical analysis is done, is the phosphate also polluting it.

Mention Delta Laboratory to any one of thousands of Rochester area youth, and chances are that all he will think of will be blisters and exhaustion.

But Delta Labs, supported by the aching feet of the Walk for Water, has started to mean a lot more to this area's fight against pollution of the land, air and water.

As the non-profit, research arm of the Monroe County Conservation Council, Delta Lab provides quick and accurate scientific measurements of pollution.

The lab can test for coliform and fecal bacteria in water to determine the amount of sewage contaminating a body of water; it tests ceramics for poisonous lead and cadmium content; and a current project measures radioactivity absorbed by food plants from nuclear fuel run-off water.

Field testing teams from the lab constantly monitor pollution in Canandaigua Lake and on the beaches of Mendon Ponds, Hamlin, Charlotte and Durand Eastman Parks and of Webster. A complete survey of the Genesee River is also being made. Work on these projects occupies the lab workers for about three days a week, according to Barbara Gill, lab manager.

Workers out in the field gather water samples so the lab can test for tell-tale coliform bacteria, which betray the presence of sewage; they test the oxygen content,

which tells about the growth rate of algae; and they analyze phosphate content on the spot with a portable lab.

"Those three tests," explains Michael Leon, one of the young men doing on the spot checks, "will give us a pretty complete picture of what sewage is doing to the water."

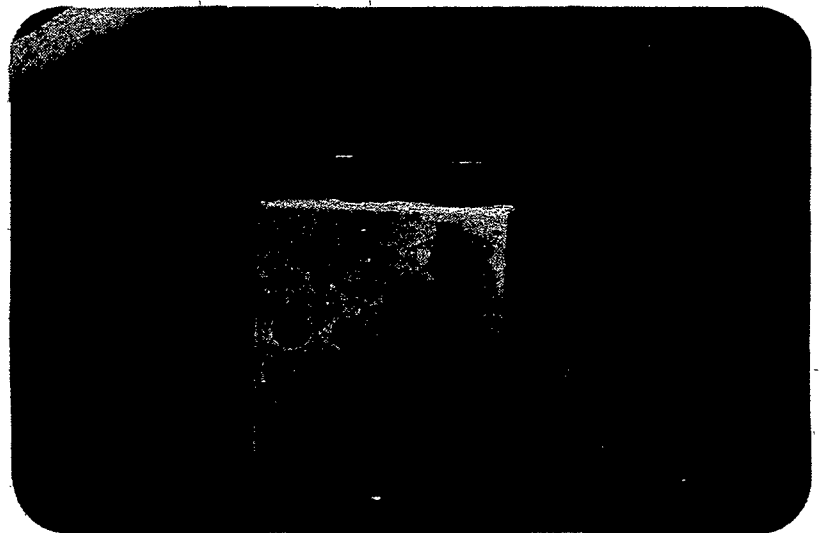
The idea for the lab grew mainly out of the efforts of lawyer Wayne Harris, now its president, and Sybron research scientist E. Grant Pike, who oversees all the laboratory testing.

"I was examining the mercury content of some fish" for the Conservation Council, explains Pike about the origin of the lab, "and it's a pretty slow process, you know; you can only do about three of them a day, and we were working in this basement."

"Well, Wayne was talking about doing tests on samples of hundreds of fish. I could see myself down in the basement cutting up fish day after day . . ."

Today the lab has progressed to the point where it has the most sophisticated pollution detection equipment in western New York; to where it can dispense expert advice on pollution abatement; and to where it can provide a needed apprenticeship for college students on their way to becoming environmental biologists.

It's worth a few sore feet.



Text and Photos
By Laurence E. Keefe



... checks radiation from Atom's Garden.
Courier-Journal



Grant Pike checks experiment by Swadesh Popli.

Wednesday, August 23, 1972



Barb Lill, lab manager in her crowded back office.