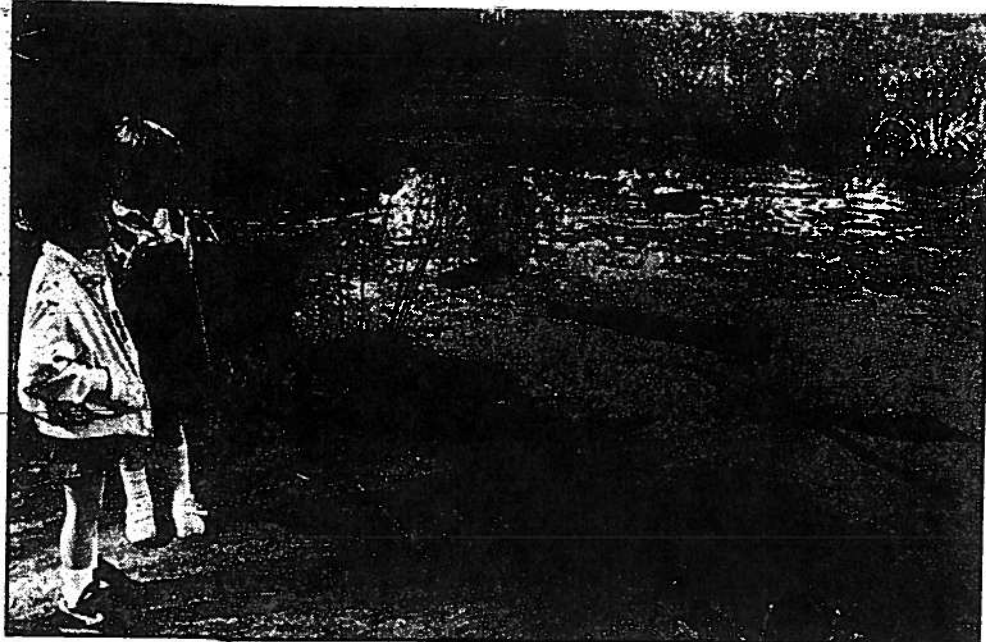


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By Sue Christian



GAZETTE PHOTO / CARL BENNETT  
Nathan Thomas Williams, 5, and Kelli Sieplenga, 4, tour the Kleinstuck Preserve with their YMCA Montessori kindergarten and preschool group.

## Pumping tied to water's rise and fall

SUE CHRISTIAN  
GAZETTE SPECIAL WRITER

Low water levels at Kalamazoo's Kleinstuck Preserve marsh over the past five years may be due to the city pumping ground water in the area, says an official in the public utilities department.

"There is a correlation between pumping at the pump station and Kleinstuck," said the department's deputy director, Bruce Minsley. "The bigger question is, 'Why is it happening?'"

Minsley's department has formed an alliance with Western Michigan University to investigate the fluctuating water levels. WMU graduate student Robert Beuchler, 35, already has begun working with the city as his thesis project in hydrogeology.

"It's a complex situation that will take awhile to figure out. We don't have any answers. That's why we're working with Western on it," Minsley said.

About three weeks ago, the team drilled an observation well 30 feet into the earth to monitor ground-water levels in the preserve area that may affect the

surface level of the marsh, Minsley said.

Pump station No. 4, located at Crosstown Parkway, appears to be the station that affects the surface level. The station, which dates back to the early 1900s, was used only in peak summer months, when demand for water was highest. But it has been used more frequently since it was rebuilt in 1983.

"In 1983 and 1984, when we used it more heavily, that's when we began to see the pumping affecting Kleinstuck Preserve," Minsley said. "In 1987 and 1988 we cut back considerably and now use it basically for summer demand loads again."

Yet city pumping may not be responsible for the lowering marsh level, Beuchler said. "The water level dropped 2 inches in the last month without pumping," he said.

He said he would investigate possible blockage in the underground waterways between the marsh and Pikes Pond, which feeds into Kleinstuck. He added that a third factor could be that the drainage basin into the marsh has become smaller.

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