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Douglas Rader went for a Saturday bike ride just before noon near his Oak Park neighborhood. He stopped short when he saw the color of Crabtree Creek.

"The creek was bright white. A startlingly wrong color," said Rader, an aquatic scientist with the Raleigh office of Environmental Defense. "It was just totally bizarre."

The creek had been filled with a fine sediment turning the water milky white, Rader said.

He rode along the length of Oak Park Trail, a greenway neighboring the creek, and gauged the pollution at about a mile and a half to two miles long.

He drove back to his office, grabbed a digital camera, shot the goo and phoned in a complaint to the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources Division of Water Quality.

Jamie Kritzer, a spokesman for DENR, said there was no evidence of any fish kill along the creek, and by the time an investigator arrived at the scene of Rader's initial complaint there was no sign of sediment. Kritzer said the investigation would continue today, but it was too early to point to a cause for the pollution.

Rader said he suspects the culprit is likely an overflowing slime pond, a wastewater pond associated with mining and excavation.

Dean Naujoks, a Riverkeeper with the Neuse River Foundation, said that Hanson Aggregates Southeast has contributed to pollution of the creek before. The company operates a quarry on Duraleigh Road, to the north of Crabtree Creek.

A message left at Hanson's Raleigh office was not returned.

Sediment clouds the waters of Crabtree Creek, prompting an investigation by the state's Division of Water Quality.

Photo by Douglas Rader

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