

Sandy Bottom Creek is a small tributary that flows through the rural town of Cedarville. The people of Cedarville are mostly farmers who have worked the land for many generations. Cedarville is a small community. It's residents know each other well and often work together to protect the area's natural resources.

In the summer the children of Cedarville swim and fish in Sandy Bottom Creek just north of town at a spot where the water is deep. Cedarville residents say this fishing hole has been providing some delicious suppers for their families for many, many years.

The creek flows through a marsh on its way out of town. This marsh is called Troubled Trader's Marsh because a long time ago a man selling goods out of his covered wagon, decided to take a shortcut to the next town and ended up driving his wagon right into the Marsh! Both his wagon and his horses got stuck in the mud. So he had to sell everything in his wagon before he could move it.

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Troubled Traders Marsh teems with animals and is alive throughout the year with colorful insects, herons, egrets, ducks, muskrats, and many kinds of fish. Last year the Cedarville town picnic was held just outside the marsh, since the scenery there is so beautiful.

This fall, the citizens of Cedarville are up-in-arms about an alarming and mysterious set of circumstances. It all started when a health official came from New Port City, an urban area downstream (south) of Cedarville, where the creek joins the Johnstown River. The official said a small boy had become ill in New Port City, and a test showed dangerous levels of a pesticide by-product in his blood. Cedarville farmers use this pesticide in their crops. The case is a mystery: the boy has never visited Cedarville and has never even left his neighborhood in New Port City!

New Port City's drinking water was tested, and not a trace of pesticide was found. The unfiltered water from the Johnstown River was tested. A small amount of pesticide was found, but this was not unusual since runoff from Cedarville farms is known to contribute small quantities of pollutant to Sandy Bottom Creek. So how did this poison get into this boy's blood?

In the state north of Cedarville, several people have also reported mild cases of a similar sickness. Yet Cedarville is the only town in the region that uses the pesticide.

The town has called a meeting to discuss the problem. The citizens are concerned about their responsibility in the matter and are also worried that they won't be able to use this chemical anymore to protect their crops. They feel this pesticide is the best one ever developed. They've used it for two years and there has never been a problem. Has there been some mistake?

No illnesses were reported during the summer, when people were eating the tomatoes and corn grown in Cedarville, and none of the crops were shipped out of state. If the pesticide is making people ill, why haven't the people eating the crops grown in Cedarville been affected? No one in Cedarville has gotten sick - though one man did report finding a dead eagle near his farm south of town.

A map of Sandy Bottom Creek, Troubled Trader's Marsh, Cedarville, the Johnstown River, New Port City, the dead eagle on the farm south of Cedarville, the state north of Cedarville with several mild cases of a similar illness.