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STATE SEEKS REMOVAL OF TAINTED SOIL

by Bill Dawson

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State officials plan to ask the present and former owners of a pesticide contaminated site in northeast Houston for "immediate removal" of polluted soil along a railroad track between the property and residences.

The companies will also be asked within 30 days to fund soil and water tests elsewhere at the site at 7621 (?) Wallisville Road to determine the extent of environmental problems, Fred Dalbey (?) of the Texas Department of Water Resources said Wednesday. OLIN CORP- SP OLIVER TXD000607628

Further enforcement action will be taken if the companies do not comply, he said.

Exposed soil in a ditch by the tracks is the biggest immediate concern because high levels of toxic pesticides were found there, said Clarence Johnson, a TDWR investigator. Homes are located just across the unfenced tracks. Most of the rest of the site is paved so it is not as pressing a concern, Johnson said.

"Potentially, there is a pretty big problem, but it hasn't been adequately assessed," said Dalbey, enforcement coordinator in TDWR's solid waste division.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency tests at the site in 1980 and 1981 found high levels of DDT, toxaphene and pentachloronitrobenzene (PCNB) in soil, but no contamination of the only well for drinking water nearby. said EPA spokesman Roger Meacham. Olin Corp. ran a pesticide blending and packaging operation there until 1973 (?).

On Jan. 20, 1981, Houston Belt and Terminal Railway Co. removed about 3,800(?) pounds of pesticide-polluted soil piled along its tracks, Meacham said. EPA supervised the partial cleanup.

Subsequent tests found more contaminated soil, especially in the site's northeast and west areas, Meacham said. EPA asked the present and former owners to prepare a cleanup plan, but decided it was too limited.

Last July, EPA officials decided the site needed more study and, because they had neither the time nor the money, transferred main responsibility for it to TDWR, Meacham said.

Eastern Investment Corp. bought the site from Olin in 1973(?) for Eureka's parent company, Mustang Tractor and Equipment Co. Later, Eureka sold the east half of the 18-acre tract to Southern Pacific Transportation Co. Eureka has since sued Olin in federal court, and Southern Pacific then sued Olin, Eureka and Mustang. Both lawsuits claim the pollution was not revealed to the buyers.

Olin attorney Tom Bayko said it wants the parties to satisfy government officials, then let the courts decide who pays how much. Olin did not conceal the contamination, he said.

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