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ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MISSOURI

DOE calls for comments on cleanup plans

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Of the Journal staff

ST. CHARLES COUNTY — The public will have until Nov. 9 to comment on four proposed initial cleanup projects at the Weldon Spring Chemical Plant site.

The U.S. Department of Energy announced that the work plans for the project were made available on Monday at four county locations.

The plans can be reviewed at the Spencer Creek Branch of the St. Charles City-County Library, 425 Spencer Creek Road, St. Peters; Butler Library at Lindenwood College campus in St. Charles; Francis Howell High School Library; and at U.S. Department of Energy offices at the plant site, located on South Highway 94.

Written comments can be sent to three addresses. Comments can be sent to Rodney R. Nelson, Weldon Spring Site Remedial Action Project, Route 2, Highway 94 South, St. Charles, Mo. 63303; Ms. Katherine Biggs, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7, 726 Minnesota Ave. Kansas City, Kan. 66101; Mr. David Bedan, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Post Office Box 176, Jefferson City, Mo. 65102.

The projects include the removal of polychlorinated biphenyls or PCB-contaminated electrical transformers, consolidating on-site debris, and the dismantling of an old steam plant and office building.

The projects would take place before a full-scale cleanup of the former Atomic Energy Commission uranium and thorium processing facility. An environmental impact statement must be completed before the larger cleanup can begin.

The short-term projects would minimize the risk to on-site personnel and residents, DOE officials say.

In all, there are nine initial cleanup projects proposed for the plant site. Written documents outlining four projects were made available for public comment after a public meeting Sept. 15 at Francis Howell high school.

The four actions included the proposed removal the electrical lines and poles, the cleanup of asbestos-contaminated piping; disposal of chemicals contained in drums on-site; and a cleanup of 1,400 yards of radioactively contaminated material on the Weldon Spring Army Reserve property.

One proposed initial cleanup project still must be made avail-

(Continued on Page 13A)

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St. Charles Journal, Wednesday, October 21, 1987

(Continued from Page 1A)

able for public comment — the construction of a dike near Ash Pond to mitigate the flow of contaminated material off-site.

A 21-day comment period is in effect once the documents are made available to the public. EPA and state officials are expected to review the proposed actions before any go-ahead is given.

EPA has oversight because a portion of the plant site has been designated a federal Superfund site.

Martin Janowski, a spokesperson for DOE, said Monday that DOE officials have received some comment on the four proposed actions that were first made available for public comment. "We can incorporate them without reworking the projects," Janowski said.

Janowski said DOE officials anticipate an approval within a week or so.

Bedan said Monday that state officials hope to have their comments ready for DOE by the end of this week.

The documents and plans issued Monday on the four projects include:

•The removal of all electric transformers that contain PCB oils. Plans are to drain the transformers, clean them with kerosene and transport them off-site to a proper licensed storage facility. The transformers may contain an estimated 28,260 gallons of PCB oil.

•Debris consolidation. The plan states, "Miscellaneous debris is randomly scattered throughout the 220-acre Weldon Spring site..." The debris could be confined to one acre. The debris includes wooden pallets, railroad ties, drinking fountain and old forklifts and abandoned trucks. Some of the material is radioactively or chemically contaminated and would have to be removed. There may be as much as 12,000 cubic yards of material.

•Dismantling the old steam plant, known as building 401. The 17,500-square-foot building is deteriorating. The tar and gravel roof may be contaminated from airborne radioactivity from when the plant was in operation. Asbestos in piping could become a hazard if the building continues to deteriorate.

•Dismantling an old administration building, known as building 409. The two-story 38,000-square-foot building once housed 250 people but now is falling apart. A threat from asbestos may increase if pipe linings deteriorate and PCB concentrations and some radioactivity have been found in parts of the building. The plan suggests removing asbestos and PCBs as well as two-inches from the tar and gravel roof, which may be contaminated.

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