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Energy Department plans hearing to discuss Chemical Plant cleanup

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WELDON SPRING — A public hearing is scheduled for March 29 on plans to remove radioactive and hazardous waste from a 9-acre quarry site near the Weldon Spring Chemical Plant site.

U.S. Department of Energy officials are expected to discuss their cleanup plans for the quarry and answer questions. The hearing is sponsored by the DOE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The hearing is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. March 29 at the Ramada Inn Wentzville, 900 Corporate Parkway.

And federal officials briefed local government and Francis Howell School District officials on their plans on Monday afternoon.

"It will give them a chance to ask questions in a less shrill environment," said Jim McKee, a DOE spokesman.

At the hearing and briefing, federal officials are expected to discuss plans for exhuming waste from the quarry, and using a private haul road to move it to a temporary storage faciity at the chemical plant site.

The quarry is along Highway 94 about 4 miles west of the plant site. It lies on a bluff above the county drinking-water well field on the Missouri River flood plain.

Tests have shown some contaminants are underground outside the quarry — but not in the well field. And federal official have said removal of the quarry waste was a high priority, even before a final decision is made about an overall cleanup of the plant site and nearby property.

Last year, federal officials proposed building a portable water-treatment plant at the quarry site. The plant would treat contaminated water in the quarry, which then would be discharged into the Missouri River.

Once the water is removed, 100,000 cubic yards of waste in the quarry then could be removed and stored on the plant site until federal officials decide how to permanently dispose of it.

The next step in the cleanup is removing this waste, and the hearings an briefings will deal with plans for doing that, say DOE officials.

Plans call for the waste material to be removed using conventional excavating equipment.

Once excavated, trucks will then haul the waste along a road that crosses Highway 94 once and follows a route adjacent to the highway to the plant site. Cleaned and empty trucks will use Highway 94 to return to the quarry.

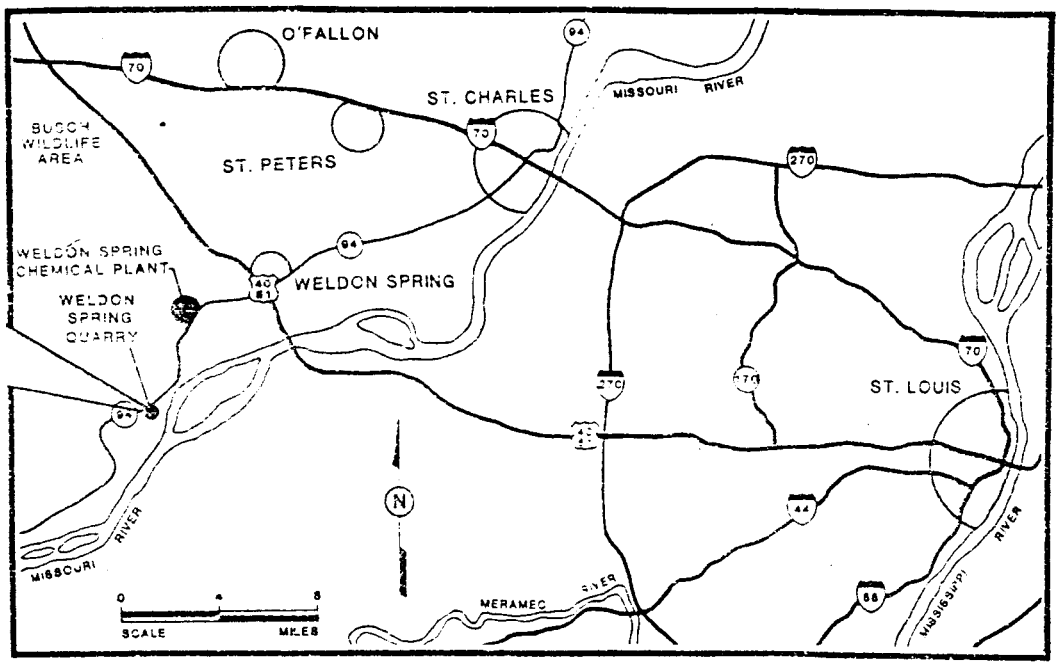
The temporary storage area is divided into various portions to set aside to store different kinds of material such as chemicals soil and rock and concrete. Wastes will be formed into piles with added protection to prevent many material from being washed or blown off the site.

The area will have a clay lining on its bottom to prevent material from seeping underground and surface water from rain will be drain off into retention ponds.

The quarry waste will be stored temporarily until a final decision is made on waste at the site. On-site storage is best because federal officials can safely monitor it, federal official say.

The temporary site is not designed for permanent disposal nor is there any thought to upgrade it for permanent stor-

Written comments can be mailed to the U.S. Department of Energy, 7295 Highway 94 South, St. Charles, 63303.



age, federal officials say.

Steve McCracken, project manager for the DOE at the plant, said federal officials are simply going to "walk through" plans for the quarry.

McCracken said federal officials will stress to officials and the public that any risk to public health during a cleanup is "very low."

Federal officials say the levels of the materials are low and they plan extensive monitoring of the waste.

The public can review the plans, which are available at the Cobbs Hall Library at Lindenwood College in St. Charles, the Spencer Creek Library in St. Peters, the Kathryn Linneman Branch Library in St. Charles, the Francis Howell South High School Library and at federal offices at the plant site.

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