

Monday, October 11, 1982, Raleigh, N.C.

Local & state news/Obituaries/Classified ads

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PCB protesters continue march to state Capitol

LOUISBURG (UPI) — Opponents of a Warren County PCB landfill resumed Sunday a 55-mile protest march to Raleigh with a seven-mile walk from Louisburg to Royal, a small town in southern Franklin County.

The protesters, who began their march Saturday in Afton, the site of the controversial landfill, plan to arrive in Raleigh Tuesday for a rally at the Capitol.

They spent Saturday night in Louisburg.

In a related development, a state highway official said the removal of PCB-tainted soil from roadsides in 14 counties should be completed later this week.

"I would anticipate we would be completed in the next two or three days," said Billy Rose, the state highway administrator.

Rose also said he thought a lawsuit filed Friday by landfill opponents was frivolous and may be an effort to stop the final pickups of contaminated soil.

PCB, a toxic chemical that has been linked to cancer in laboratory animals, was dumped illegally along about 243 miles of state highways more than four years ago. Dirt from about 231 miles of roads has been picked up and transported to the landfill since it opened Sept. 15.

The state constructed the landfill after the Environmental Protection Agency ordered the chemical removed from roadsides and provided a grant covering most of the cost of removal.

Many Warren County residents oppose the landfill and have tried to block state Department of Transportation trucks carrying dirt to the landfill. More than 500 arrests have been made since the landfill opened.

The opponents contend the Warren County site was chosen be-

cause the area is poor, predominately black and politically weak. They fear the PCBs eventually will leak from the landfill and contaminate drinking water.

The state repeatedly has stated that Warren County was the best location based on a number of criteria and says the landfill is the best and safest way of disposing of the chemical.

Gov. James B. Hunt Jr. met with opposition leaders Friday and promised to ensure that the landfill would not become a health danger.

He also said he would pursue means for detoxifying the chemical in the landfill, once a feasible means is found, but said he would not stop the trucks from picking up the remaining contaminated dirt and putting it in the landfill.

The protest march was started by opponents not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting, but other opponents said they were pleased by Hunt's response.

"I think we got just about all we could get, and clear-thinking individuals feel that," said Joyce Lubbers, adding that she was disturbed that other opponents were marching to Raleigh.

Mrs. Lubbers and five other opponents filed a lawsuit Friday seeking to block trucks from using the two secondary roads leading to the landfill. In the suit filed in Warren County Superior Court, they contend weight limits for the two roads were raised illegally last month by Transportation Secretary William Roberson.

The suit contends that Roberson changed the weight limit to allow vehicles weighing more than 13,000 pounds an axle to use the road, but when the state Board of Transportation gave the secretary

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authority to restrict weight limits, it did not also give him power to raise limits.

But Rose said the board gave the secretary all authority over weight limits.

"It just doesn't make sense for

the board to delegate to the secretary authority to lower weight limits and not allow him to increase them," he said.

Rose said he had not seen the suit but "based on my general knowledge, it appears to be a frivolous suit."