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'Superfunds' now available

EPA to test sites for PCB pollution

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4/377

FRONT PAGE

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will conduct "contamination assessment tests" at the old Lemon Lane dump and at Neal's Landfill to determine the extent of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) pollution at the two former dump sites.

EPA attorney Barbara Magel said Wednesday the two sites have become eligible for "superfund" money. The Neal site, in western Monroe County, was listed as one of the nation's most hazardous waste sites. A final list of 400 sites — including the Lemon Lane site — is due out later this year.

PCBs found in fish in Richland Creek
Page 4

"AFTER WE DO some testing," Magel said, "we'll know what clean-up action may be involved."

The EPA has sent a letter to Westinghouse Corp. in Bloomington asking the company to perform the tests. Magel said there was little chance Westinghouse would comply. She also said Westinghouse may be liable for clean-up costs.

Initial testing of water and soil at the Neal site was conducted last fall to determine what kinds of further testing will be needed. According to Beverly Kush, an environmental engineer with the EPA, the new testing will first locate the areas of contamination and then install monitoring wells where needed.

The data will be analyzed by the EPA and a final report by the testing firm — Ecology and Environment Inc. — will be submitted to the EPA. At that point a superfund site feasibility study will be done to determine clean-up plans and alternatives.

THAT MEANS actual government-funded clean-up of the site could be a few years down the road, Kush said.

Kush said drinking water in the area of Neal's Landfill has not been contaminated by PCBs, a chemical used as insulating fluid in heavy electrical equipment. The chemical may cause cancer and a variety of other health problems in humans.

The City of Bloomington has filed a $329 million damage suit against Westinghouse Corp., the company charged with disposing of PCB-contaminated materials into the city sewer system and landfill, and the Monsanto Co., which developed the chemical. Besides the Neal and Lemon Lane sites, PCBs have been found at the Monroe County Landfill and in a small dump in Owen County.

The Indiana Environmental Management Board is in the process of scheduling public hearings into the extent of PCB contamination in the Bloomington area.

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