

Hazardous Waste Sites List To Be Released

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WASHINGTON — A House of Representatives subcommittee plans to issue a list on Monday of 250 sites in the United States (including two in North Carolina) where hazardous wastes are thought to present a great potential threat to drinking water supplies.

"It will become the most volatile domestic issue of the 1980s," said Rep. Toby Moffett, D-Conn., who heads the subcommittee on Environment, Energy and Natural Resources, which is issuing the report.

"It touches virtually every state," Moffett said in an interview in advance of the report's release. "Nothing comes close to rivaling the issue of contaminated water."

A subcommittee aide warned that the list was incomplete because it was based on states compiling the data and submitting them to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, which, in turn, analyzed them and submitted them to Congress.

The list contains 2,100 sites with varying potentials of harm to water supplies. The 250 with the most imminent peril were said to be those that met these criteria: They contain potentially hazardous wastes, there is no impermeable lining between the wastes and the ground-water supply, and they are within a mile of a potential water supply well.

Some of the concerns that maintain the dump sites included on the list disputed their presence there when reached for comment. Some said that dumping had stopped some years ago and others said that they were conforming to their states' environmental requirements.

The subcommittee aide conceded as much. "Some of the information may be inaccurate," he said, but he added, "Some of the areas may no longer be in use, but they are continuing to cause damage."

By this, he said, he meant that some holding areas were no longer active, but the hazardous wastes are in the ground from previous use. Each time it rains, he said, the wastes sink deeper into the ground, finally reaching the water table.

"The list may be unfair to certain sites," the aide said, "but in any event, the existence of an unlined site is a potential danger to the groundwater supply."

Moffett said that he expected virtually every member of Congress to support him in getting funds appropriated to deal with the problem under laws that already exist.

"This is a piece of cake politically," the congressman said, "because in this country we've become so accustomed to just turning on the faucet. Every member, from conservative Republicans to liberal Democrats, will support this."

Moffett said that his subcommittee had some misgivings over whether to release the list. "This is just dynamite," he said.

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