ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 1981
SECTION 1-8B

Toxic Chemicals Found In Drums Near Ellisville

By Marjorie Mandel
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Toxic chemicals, including small concentrations of PCBs, have been found in drums of waste discovered recently along Strecher Road west of Ellisville, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources has reported.

James Long, the department's emergency response coordinator, said laboratory analysis of samples taken from the drums found several hazardous chemicals, including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in concentrations of parts per billion. PCBs are suspected of causing cancer. The drums were found partly buried near the bank of Caulks Creek.

Long said his department has asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to pay for cleaning the site with its "superfund." Congress established the $1.6 billion trust fund last year to clean up abandoned hazardous waste sites around the country.

Long said he was uncertain how much the cleanup would cost.

The drums were found earlier this month either on or near an 11.5-acre tract on Strecher owned by the Biles Oil Co. and Jerry-Russell Biles Inc., a subsidiary of Biles Oil that collects and disposes of commercial wastes.

Department employees excavated 38 55-gallon drums, but when some drums were pulled from the ground, others were revealed. Long said the department has no idea how many drums may be buried on the property.

In addition, two pits were found into which bulk liquid wastes were supposedly dumped without containers. Long said a toxic chemical was found when employees dug into one of the pits with a backhoe. Only rubbish was found in the other pit.

Long said the department took soil and water samples on the Biles property last fall for chemical contamination tests but found no drums or pits then.

The drums found this month contain some of the same kinds of toxic chemicals as those found last summer on several nearby sites owned by

See DRUMS, Page 5

Drums

FROM PAGE ONE

Rosalie Investments Co., Long said. In addition, he said, the drums bear "some similarity" in markings.

Long said the department is investigating the possibility that the same person or persons was responsible for dumping at all the sites. "We're continuing to pursue that angle," he said.

A contractor hired by the Department of Natural Resources recently completed the removal of more than 100 drums on the Rosalie property. The cost of that cleanup will be paid for from $120,000 the department has received from the Missouri Legislature to clean up hazardous waste sites. But Long said his department does not have enough money to clean up the drums found this month.

Department employees have covered the excavated barrels with plastic sheeting, sand and gravel. While noting that it was a temporary measure, Long said the work "should buy us some time."

Long said that the covering should prevent rainfall from flushing chemicals into the groundwater, but that would not prevent any movement of groundwater already possibly contaminated with waste.

Fred A. Lafser, director of the department, said that "although no immediate danger to public health is thought to exist," further tests for groundwater pollution will be made by taking water samples from area wells and Caulks Creek.

Long said the department's next step is to survey the site to determine the legal property lines. And then, depending on EPA's answer on whether to pay for the cleanup, "we'll either hold tight or proceed on our own" to draw up a cleanup plan, he said.

In addition to removing the drums and liquid waste, "quite a bit of soil may have to be removed," Long said.

MONS 011850