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Toxic material may already be buried near Wilsonville

SPRINGFIELD — An Earthline Corp. attorney testified in appellate court here this morning that there may be more PCBs and additional hazardous and toxic materials buried at the controversial Earthline Corp. landfill near Wilsonville.

The attorney, Stuart Dobbs, said "There may be additional PCBs buried there beyond the current barrels in question."

"I won't kid the court," Dobbs added, "There may be other materials hazardous and toxic that are being handled by this facility."

Dobbs comments came before a three-judge appellate court during hearings on Earthline Corp's appeal on Circuit Judge John Russell's injunction temporarily prohibiting dumping of the PCB-contaminated soil at the Earthline landfill near Wilsonville.

After taking testimony from both sides, the court recessed shortly before noon today. A decision is expected later in the week, but there was some speculation that the court may render its opinion late today or tomorrow.

Dobbs testified that "195 or 200" barrels of the PCBs have been deposited near Wilsonville, out of a planned delivery of 800 barrells.

"If you don't have a place like this to put these PCBs, they'll be deposited anywhere, like you see stoves and refrigerators in ravines in the country," Dobbs said.

Dobbs likened the amount of PCB in each drum to the PCB contained in a flourescent light bulb, and contended that the chemical poses no immediate dangers to the community.

PCBs, polychloriated Biphenyls, are a chemical used in electrical conduction. It has been shown to cause cancer in animals, and was linked to widespread sickness in Japan, especially among newborn babies, in the late 1960's.

Former Judge Paul Verticchio and Macoupin County State's Atty. Ken Boyle argued the potential dangers of PCBs, and contended that neither Earthline nor the state EPA ever informed the community that possibly harmful or toxic materials would be dumped there.

Boyle said that the life expectancy of PCBs is 600 years, and that it is impossible for human or animal tissue to destroy the chemical once it gains entry to fatty tissues.

Boyle suggested in the hearing that the PCBs be transported to a Monsanto Corp. facility in northern Illinois, where a method has been devised to neutralize the chemical.

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