

2000 come to protest York County farm dump

BY JOYCE BUPP
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SPRING GROVE — Support, in large numbers of voting citizens, was what North Codorus farmers fighting a proposed chemical dump were hoping for a fact-finding meeting last Tuesday with the Department of Environmental Resources.

And support was what they got, with an estimated 2000 people turning out at Spring Grove Junior High School to protest, to a person, the DER permit held by Sunny Farms, Ltd. to bury industrial and possibly hazardous wastes in North Codorus farmland.

Farm owner Steve Marsh, president of the citizens' group OUCH, Inc. (Opposing Unnecessary Chemical Hazards), chaired the session geared to bring out new facts that opponents hope may boost their drive for permit revocation.

John Embich, assistant attorney general for the solid waste department told the citizens that DER recognizes Sunny Farms as a separate entity from Stabatrol, Inc., which recently purchased the corporate assets of Sunny Farm. The permit to dump industrial waste, issued in December of 1979, has been granted to Sunny Farms and is not to be transferrable.

Who actually owns the land and who actually holds the dumping permit had been two key issues with area residents fighting the dumping proposal.

landfill that Sunny Farms had operated on the site, which was suspended in 1976 for violations of regulations during 1974. Among those violations was the illegal dumping of hazardous substances.

OUCH, Inc., and its attorneys say they hope to use Sunny Farms history of operations as a lever to demand that DER reopen the permit application for further consideration.

If the permit studies are reopened, legislator working with the group figure that Stabatrol can be brought under a tough new state environmental law that took effect September 5, which would require that DER look at the past operational history of dump permit applicants.

One incident cited during the fact-finding dealt with a truckload of 55-gallon drums that had been brought to Sunny Farms former solid waste facility in the Spring of 1974. When a bulldozer operated crushed a drum during waste burial, liquids inside the drum sprayed over the surrounding immediate area.

A DER inspector happened to be observing the process.

While that truck was then sent back with most of the remaining waste, a DER spokesman said records showed the truck weighed 1200 pounds less upon leaving than when it had arrived.

Farmers demanded to know if contents of the drums crushed had ever

been removed or records show its location.

Rural residents of the valleys adjacent to the steep ridge dumpsite have repeatedly told DER officials that the area is laced with old worked-out iron mine veins and shafts. Their pleas had been turned aside, with DER representatives previously insisting that if such shafts were in existence, they would have been found during geological survey of the site.

However, DER hydrologist Steve Curran told the fact-finding audience that an 1874 map, just recently brought to his attention, does indicate the presence of mines in the area.

He noted that only one 8x4x20-foot shaft is indicated and the exact location of the former access opening is not known.

"But, if it is discovered by Sunny Farms during its disposal process, DER would require that no wastes be buried in that spot," he added.

His statement evoked laughter, hoots and hollering from the mostly well-behaved assemblage.

OUCH Inc.'s attorney Ed Golla claimed that Sunny Farms committed perjury on its application by not including information on those old mines and suggested that concealment of such facts would be reason enough for revoking the permit.

Financial bonding of the operation was also a sore point with the dump opponents. Although Sunny

Farms posted a bond obligation of \$1.2 million with the state for its 1979 permit, the firm has paid out to date \$15,000, based on a fee of \$5,000 per acre of land it plans to use for actual disposal.

Officials of DER readily concurred with 93rd district legislator A. Carville Foster who insisted that the sum is far too small. Opponents suggest millions of dollars might be needed should a dump-related disaster ever strike the land, water, health or earning ability of the area's farmers and rural residents.

Additionally, a federal regulation slated to take effect on November 19 will require operators of hazardous dumping facilities to have assets of at least \$10 million, which Stabatrol, Inc. does not now possess.

One after another, residents of the valleys' farms and their neighbors rose to the microphone to question other aspects of the dumping proposals: the engineering and stability of the plastic encased vaulting for the wastes, the potential run-off problems from the hillside site, possibilities of eventual storage of nuclear wastes at the site, mixing of the various chemicals and length of the toxicity of the materials.

J. Robert Snyder, of Blue

Ball, called the DER approved permit methods the "cheapest current technology available," and claimed it would "allow the operators to make a killing."

He cited an EPA study recently published claiming that 90 percent of the nation's landfills are leaking toxic substances into the ground water.

Almost as if on cue, a

House subcommittee Monday released a list of some 250 sites across the country where hazardous chemicals might be leaking into groundwater supplies.

Their report called on the federal Environmental Protection Agency to "locate potential threats to groundwater and eliminate them before precious groundwater supplies are irreversibly damaged."



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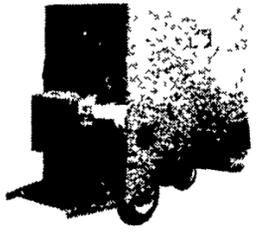
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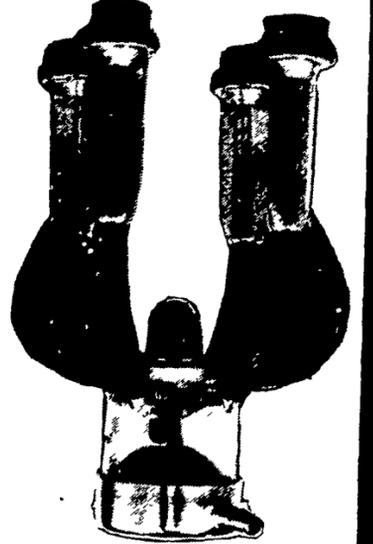
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