

Pollution hearing delayed Spring Creek

By TOM DEMEO
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

Prosecution of the Reutgers-Nease Chemical Co. of State College, for allegedly contaminating Spring Creek with the insecticides Kepone and Mirex, has been delayed by a ruling of the Environmental Hearing Board.

The board granted both the state Department of Environmental Resources — the prosecutor — and Reutgers-Nease extensions of their deadlines to submit pre-hearing memoranda. Reutgers-Nease received an extension to March 31; DER's is to April 30. The development is the latest in a series of deadline extensions.

"Action as far as getting a court order to force Nease to clean up the contamination is pretty far down the road," DER Attorney Jack Krill said.

"Litigation is a slow and time-consuming process," he said. "We have to organize all of the evidence to be presented before the hearing."

The memoranda will state the case of each side and the witnesses and evidence each intends to submit, Krill said.

The Kepone and Mirex were produced by Reutgers-Nease in 1959 and 1963. Waste material from the manufacturing was stored in earthen lagoons on the company's property east of the Benner Pike. DER contends the chemicals leaked into nearby Thornton Spring and eventually into Spring Creek.

Theodore Clista, Susquehanna River basin engineer for DER, said cleanup of

the chemicals could involve incineration of the contaminated soil and rock.

An article in the Harrisburg Patriot-News said it would be "technically and financially impractical" for Reutgers-Nease to clean up the contamination. But Krill said it was the opinion of DER's technical staff that the pollution could be cleaned up.

"We don't want to underestimate the difficulty involved, but we are optimistic that the problem (of contamination) can be solved," he said.

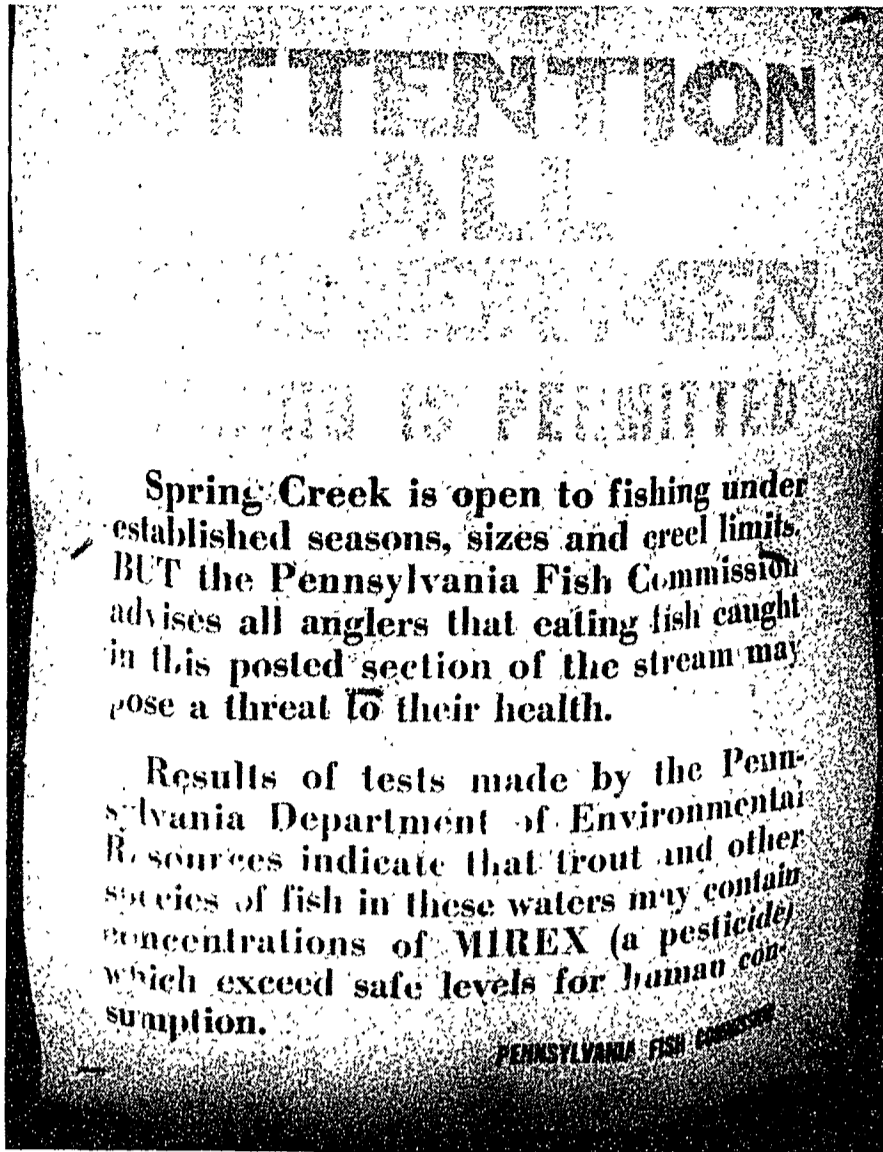
In a separate development, the Pennsylvania Fish Commission will continue stocking a portion of Spring Creek. The stocking will be conducted in preparation for the opening of trout season April 14.

Paul F. Swanson, supervisor of the commission's Lock Haven office, said trout stocking would be continued upstream from the point where Route 26 (Benner Pike) crosses the stream near the village of Lemont.

Downstream of Route 26 the commission has posted signs warning that the stream is contaminated and that fish taken from it should not be eaten.

A recent sample of fish taken from the contaminated part of Spring Creek contained Mirex far in excess of the safe level set by the FDA, according to the Harrisburg Patriot-News. However, Kepone was "non-detectable," a fish commission source said.

Swanson said that it was the commission's position that the stream was safe upstream from Route 26.



This sign was posted near Spring Creek after the Reutgers-Nease Chemical Co. of State College was charged with allegedly contaminating the creek with the insecticides Kepone and Mirex. Prosecution against the company was delayed because the state Environmental Hearing Board granted the state Department of Environmental Resources and Reutgers-Nease extensions on their deadlines to submit pre-hearing memoranda.

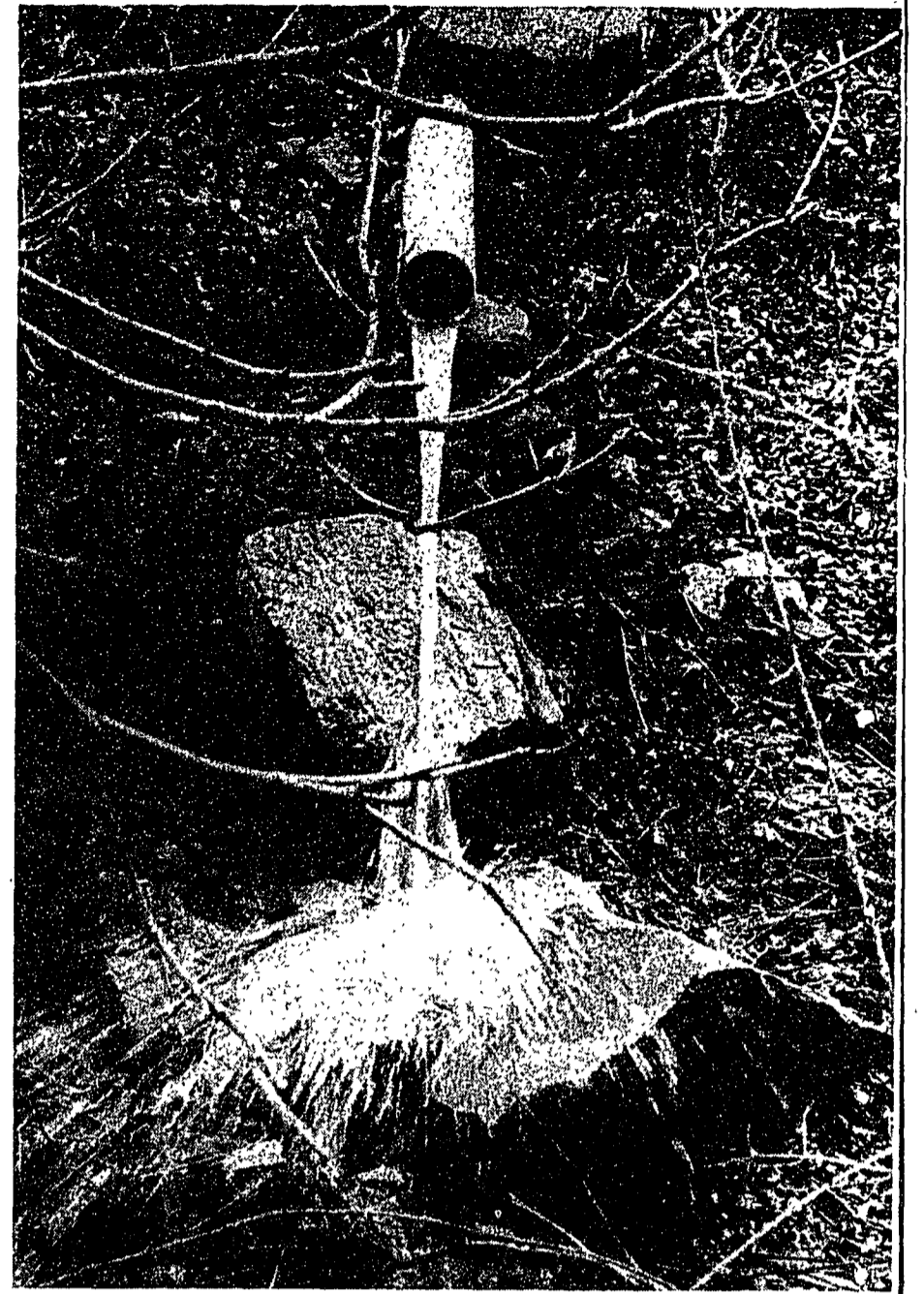


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