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## Pollution woes ease in Troy (2-20-03)

By ERIKA COHEN for SentinelSource

TROY -- Pollution at the Rockwood Brook industrial landfill may not be as bad as officials thought, and a system of concrete chambers should be in place by early summer to trap the liquid before it does any further damage.

At a forum Wednesday night, representatives from the N.H. Department of Environmental Services and the New England office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency told a crowd of about 70 that thousands of barrels of chemicals buried decades ago by Troy Mills Inc. are beginning to leak, but that pollutants have not yet reached Rockwood Brook.

"(The pollution) is clearly a problem," said Tom Hatzopoulos, on-scene coordinator for the federal environmental agency. "It's clearly visible, it's there, it has an odor and something needs to be done about it."

While the audience sat quietly and attentively, Hatzopoulos explained that liquid from about 30 percent of the barrels, which were buried before tougher environmental standards were in place, has leaked into the wetlands and is now floating on top of the water table.

He said tests show the contaminated liquid is being contained by the wetlands and has not reached Sand Pond or the bedrock, where most people get their drinking water.

Last summer, Troy officials initially closed the beach at Sand Dam recreation area and canceled the recreation department's swimming program after trace amounts of diethyl phthalate, a carcinogenic compound, were found upstream from the recreation area. Although the water at Sand Dam tested okay and the program was restarted, the scare affected attendance at the swim program.

Two acres at the southern tip of the 270-acre Rockwood Brook property contain between 6,000 and 10,000 barrels of chemicals that Troy Mills legally buried in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of these drums contain liquid petroleum-based compounds.

Once the snow disappears, Hatzopoulos said construction would begin on a system of concrete chambers to catch and contain the contaminated liquid. Construction should be finished by early this summer, he said.

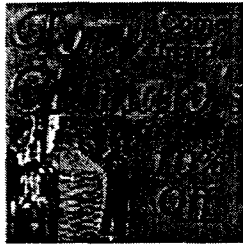
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The federal environmental agency has committed \$960,000 to construct the system. Once it is constructed, the N.H. Department of Environmental Services will check the chambers periodically and empty them of contaminants.

A similar containment system is in place at Beede Waste Oil in Plaistow. Richard H. Pease, of the state environmental agency, said the system at Beede has been working almost three years and has trapped about 70,000 gallons, almost twice as much as they expected. Pease said the system is holding up well.

In addition to the \$960,000, the federal environmental agency has also applied for \$8 million in additional funding, enough to remove all the barrels from the site.

Nancy A. Smith, who is leading the federal agency's efforts to get Rockwood Brook listed as a Superfund site, said chances of getting the \$8 million are very unlikely if the site does not make the Superfund list.

Superfund sites are uncontrolled hazardous waste sites designated by the federal government as deserving the highest priority for cleanup. The Troy site is one of 30 in the nation currently under consideration for the list. Smith said the earliest the agency would know about the status of the Troy site is September.

Donald R. Jutton, president of Municipal Resources Inc., the company Troy selectmen hired to deal with the Troy Mills bankruptcy proceedings, encouraged the crowd to write to their legislators and ask support for the listing.

State Senate President Thomas R. Eaton, R-Keene, told the crowd he would write a letter to Gov. Craig R. Benson seeking state support for the Superfund listing.

During a question-and-answer session, numerous residents expressed concern that a proposal by Goggin Co. of Portland, Maine, to build a commercial landfill on the site might come to fruition without their approval.

"Neither the state of New Hampshire or the (federal environmental agency) could cut a deal with somebody to put a landfill on the site unless the town voted for it," Jutton said.

Other residents expressed concerns that publicity about the contaminated site would lower property values in town. Jutton said this would not be the case if the site is properly cleaned up because people will see that the town is attentive.

L. Bruce McCulley, selectmen chairman, agreed, adding he is confident that between the work of Jutton and the federal and state environmental agencies, "we're starting to get things working in the right direction."