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SESD to fence off Salem Acres site

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SALEM — The South Essex Sewage District (SESD) will fence off the Salem Acres next week but is delaying any more work on the hazardous waste site until it determines what other companies polluted the area between 1969 and 1981.

The district's lawyer, John Serafini, said the board has obtained a copy of a May 1984 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report, which indicates the Salem Acres site was used for dumping after 1969, the year the SESD stopped dumping waste on the 161-acre site.

"I want to be sure the district is only responsible for what it did up to 1969," said Serafini. "If others have been doing something since 1969, they should bear their fair share."

The board voted yesterday in executive session to fence the site but said it would have to meet with the EPA and state Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE) to discuss the other users of the site before it would begin any cleanup.

The EPA recently nominated the site to the Superfund list, making it eligible for federal funds to help in the cleanup of the hazardous wastes.

Salem Acres is located in Salem on the Peabody city line approxi-

mately quarter-mile west of Route 107.

Because of inaction at the site, the DEQE sent the district a letter on Nov. 21 ordering it to fence the site and begin immediate cleanup of the area.

The letter threatened legal action if the district did not comply.

Similar letters were sent to the New England Power Co. and the DiBiase Brothers, the owners of Salem Acres.

A group of local residents has lobbied forcefully over the past month to have the area fenced off to prevent children and others from wandering onto it.

The state's letter ordered the district to have a cleanup plan ready by Dec. 10 and to contract a fence company by Dec. 17.

But Serafini said the district had received an extension until Jan. 3 to comply with the directives.

Serafini said that EPA inspectors at the site in 1980 reported new roads, recent excavation and grading by heavy equipment, oil and chemical residue on top of two pits and scattered leather scraps.

"We were there," said Serafini. "There's no question about that. To the extent what we did up to 1969 poses a problem, to that extent the district will step up to that."

Serafini said the board will meet within the next two weeks with representatives of the state and federal environmental agencies.