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IEPA approves controversial redesign for waste disposal at Clinton landfill

Story

Discussion

By Kevin Barlow | kbarlow@pantagraph.com | Posted: Friday, January 8, 2010 7:45 pm |

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CLINTON -- The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has approved the controversial redesign of 22.5 acres at the Clinton Landfill for the disposal of various industrial wastes, including some containing polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB).

The federal EPA also must approve the permit requested by Peoria Disposal Co., parent company of landfill owner Area Disposal Inc. It is expected to announce its decision later this year after a public hearing in Clinton.

"The IEPA approved this permit based on the fact the application met or exceeded all of the regulatory requirements for issuance," said Stephen Nightingale, permits section manager for the IEPA.

The leader of a DeWitt County group opposed to the issuance of the permit says he was not surprised by the IEPA's ruling.

"This decision does not make sense, but we feel the IEPA had their minds made up that they would approve this permit a long time ago," said Matt Varble, President of WATCH (We're Against Toxic Chemicals).

Current standards call for a single collection system for leachate, the water that percolates through the landfill, and for a single impermeable liner for the landfill cells, he said. The company's plan exceeds those standards.

"The design for Clinton essentially doubles the usual environmental safeguards," he said.

Nightingale said two additional conditions were added to the permit.

Area Disposal must submit a plan to monitor the drainage layer located between the upper and lower liners. Engineers also must describe how the data from this monitoring will be used in determining if the upper liner system may be leaking and what actions will be taken if such a determination is made.

PCBs were produced in the United States from 1930 to 1977 for a wide variety of industrial uses, but most uses were banned in 1979. All uses were banned in 1984.

While the company says the PCBs will be made nonhazardous before storage, critics worry about leakage into groundwater, including the Mahomet Aquifer.

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