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State narrows list of sites to dump hazardous wastes

By Nancy Minkoff

State officials know where they won't be dumping hazardous wastes. Now, they have to decide where they can dispose of dangerous substances.

So far, nine counties—Garrett, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, Worcester, Wicomico and Somerset—have been declared unsuitable for hazardous waste disposal.

That doesn't mean that all other counties in the state are suitable, however, explained Anne C. Sloan, project manager for the Maryland Environmental Service Inc., which is searching for dump sites. **JUL 20 1981**

Development, accessibility to major roads, zoning and the size of sites are other considerations. Officials hope to complete their inventory of potential dump sites within the next month, following a year's review of the geology, geography and accessibility of potential dump sites. **EVENING SUN**

The search began after the 1980 General Assembly created the Hazardous Waste Facilities Siting Board. The board must approve applications from private firms interested in developing waste processing centers and landfills.

But, before the board can begin processing applications, it must assess the state's disposal needs and areas throughout the state where those needs can be met safely. **JUL 20 1981**

By mid-August, the siting board hopes to know the precise disposal needs of the state, said William M. Sloan, secretary to the board.

In 1980, nearly 350,000 tons of toxic waste were produced in Maryland. Because of improved handling techniques and downgrading of some waste materials, that figure is expected to drop.

Even so, new dumping sites are needed. Now, only two toxic waste landfills are licensed in the state. Only the Solley

Road landfill in Glen Burnie accepts waste from a number of generators.

The state also has four chemical processing centers, but none are large enough to handle all the waste produced. **JUL 20 1981**

Companies already are seeking permission to open new facilities, Mr. Sloan said. But "right now, we're telling them it's premature. We hope to be ready in the fall." **EVENING SUN**

That does not mean a sudden end to the state's disposal problems, however.

Companies wanting to open a dump site must get the board's approval, a process taking at least six months. Then, they need a permit from the state health department, which could take up to two years.

Construction of a facility could take another two more years.

Despite the time lag, communities all over Maryland are gearing up to battle development of a hazardous waste site in their areas.

Cecil County residents, already battling a plan to house refugees at the old Bainbridge Naval Center, contend their county should be scratched from the list of potential sites. **EVENING SUN**

Residents fear their county, being rural and out-of-the-way, may lack the political clout to fight off plans to open a dump site. They have met with members of the board and the Maryland Environmental Service to voice their opposition. **JUL 20 1981**

Whether they will succeed is questionable. The siting board is independent and its decisions supersede local government action.

"We do plan to consult with local governments, though," Mr. Sloan said. "And we have held public hearings in the past and will hold more as we progress."

1980-1989

City selects 4 possible sites for new landfill

By Will Englund

The problem with dumps is that you can only fill them up once, so you always have to be looking for another one.

The city barged its way into the Woodberry Quarry off Cold Spring lane just last April, bypassing the state's drawn-out permit process, but right away had to begin sifting up possible other sites—to be used a couple of years or so down the pike—for getting rid of everyone's trash.

Then week the city decided to concentrate on 4 of its original 11 possibilities, and probably will begin seeking permits within the next few weeks. George Perdikakis, of the Public Works Department, said yesterday.

JUL 3 0 1981

The department also will begin the first geological testing and economic planning to see how feasible it would be to use each of the sites, he said.

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The city is not necessarily planning to use all the sites just because it is seeking permits, he added.

They sites are:

- A 150-acre plot off Quarantine road in southeastern Baltimore.
- A 44-acre plot 1 1/2 miles away on Hawkins Point road.
- A ravine in Gwynne Falls Park near Hilton parkway.
- A quarry off the 2900 block West Baltimore street, also on the Gwynne Falls.

The sites were selected, based on drawings and aerial photographs, at a meeting Tuesday between public works officials and Mayor Schaefer.

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All but the site within Gwynne Falls Park are privately owned. Mr. Perdikakis said the city has not come up with firm figures on how much they might cost to buy.

JUL 3 0 1981

Among the factors that will be involved in the final decision on which site or sites to use, Mr. Perdikakis said, are location, access, space, cost of preparation and—of course—politics.

"You have the technical and political issues," he said. "It's going to be a battle. We know that. But I can assure you when

we do pick the best site, it will be environmentally sound and properly run."

JUL 3 0 1981

Each of the sites has its peculiarities. Mr. Perdikakis said none was a front-runner right now.

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The quarry on the Gwynne Falls is the site of a concrete plant owned by Gentex Stone Products Company. Roland Manger, director of land management for the company, said yesterday that Gentex was not particularly eager to move the plant.

"We've been kind of walking on eggs with that operation down there for a number of years," he said, first when Interstate 79 was supposed to go through the site. That threat had died down, but "now we're back to walking on eggs again."

He said that when plans for I-79 were still hovering over the plant, the company began looking for other sites within Baltimore.

"We never really found a suitable location," he said.

"It's tucked down in that quarry. Trying to duplicate that kind of physical location somewhere else in the city would be difficult, if not impossible. If we had to move, we would be distressed. There's no question about that."

JUL 3 0 1981

He said the plant requires tall structures for soil, fuel, yard areas, good security and room for stockpiling. He also said it creates "sagging dust" and a large amount of traffic—neither of which would be popular with future neighbors.

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Mr. Perdikakis said the city recognizes the problem. "They want to stay in Baltimore city, and we want them to stay in Baltimore city." He said the city would try to offer help in relocating if it comes to that, but "that's a difficulty there."

Mr. Manger said his company had had no formal talks with the city yet about turning the site into a landfill. "We'll hold our breath and hope we can convince them to go elsewhere," he said.

JUL 3 0 1981

The Gwynne Falls Park fill has the advantage of already being owned by the city, but the disadvantage of being a park. Richard R. Trisler, deputy public works director, said the particular location in the park, a ravine of a dozen acres or so, contains some venerable old trees that the city would rather not cut down.

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The site "has more disadvantages than the others," Mr. Perdikakis said.

The largest site, on Quarantine road, is much bigger than the city needs. Mr. Perdikakis said there is a suggestion that the city could buy the land and then lease half of it to an industry that would be attracted by the new services there.

Currently there is no sewage line on the site; a landfill would bring both that and a treatment plant.

"That's a piece of land that could be valuable," he said.

The land is not now one parcel. The largest section is owned by W. R. Grant & Co., according to Mr. Trisler. Another piece is owned by the city. It is about 40 percent wooded and the rest clear, with a few buildings but no industry on it, Mr. Perdikakis said.

In the meantime, the city is going to try to prolong the life of the Woodberry Quarry by taking the waste from demolition and street work to a landfill on Bowleys lane and burning 900 to 1,000 tons of garbage every day in the newly renovated incinerator on Pulaski highway. That incinerator should be up to full speed in two or three weeks, Mr. Perdikakis said.

Landfills not a solution but a new problem to environmentalists

By Tom Horton

They might have seemed a typical group tour, another gay adornment to the Inner Harbor's milling crowds of pleasure-seekers last Thursday, clutching their pink balloons that sported the names of where they were from—Curtis Bay, Hawkins Point, Marley Neck, Norris Farm.

In fact, the balloons all represented sites of long and bitter battles fought by members of the Maryland Waste Coalition against toxic waste dumps in their communities—mostly places you could see on a clear day from the observation deck of the World Trade Center, an antiseptic, air-conditioned remove from which to view the port region's industrial sphincters.

The full press turnout for their low-key rally on waste management was ironic, because it was mostly inspired by an unanticipated crisis—headlines that morning of a new federal report claiming the Solley road landfill was seeping toxic chemicals into an Anne Arundel county water supply.

Suddenly, the world seemed interested in everything the coalition had to say about hazardous waste, said Mary Rosso, a spokeswoman and resident of the Solley road area on Marley Neck in Anne Arundel county.

But the crux of what they had to say is that it's not enough to just get outraged and crank up the news media and call on health officials to "do something" each time a landfill leaks, not if you continue to pay scant attention to the long-range, unsexy, unresolved problem of managing Maryland's flood tide of chemical-industrial wastes.

Landfills are an insidious contributor to the problem, the coalition feels, in that much of the public sees them as a "final solution" to toxic waste disposal.

It is, they say, the same old "out of sight, out of mind" mentality that has led us to use our waterways to carry away our sewage, trusting (mistakenly, it has often turned out) that modern treatment plants will protect the environment.

Now modern chemical landfills are a lot better designed and built and regulated than the dumps of past decades and the unconscionable messes like New York's Love Canal.

But can we really rely on them to contain chemical brews that could wreak terrible environmental and human health damage if they leaked even a century or more from now?

It is not just the citizens of the Maryland Waste Coalition who think not, but also a number of the very scientists and environmental officials who are busily working to design new landfills.

"The worst misconception we have given the public is that landfills are a permanent solution," James B. Coulter, state Secretary of Natural Resources, has said.

"Landfills are the absolute, last resort" in managing hazardous wastes, says William M. Eichbaum, head of the state health department's Office of Environmental Programs.

The rub, of course, as Mr. Eichbaum is quick to add, is that other options "just aren't there now." So we go on planning new landfills.

The Maryland Waste Coalition feels this situation "will never change until we price the landfilling of hazardous wastes to reflect not just the relatively low, short-term costs ... but the truly astronomical costs of ensuring they would never be a problem" decades or centuries from now, said John Kabler, a member of the coalition.

And if you think those costs aren't there, coalition members say, try to get any private chemical landfill operator to assume permanent liability for a landfill.

And so the taxpayer assumes the burden, which is already estimated in the billions to clean up existing problems from old chemical landfills.

To start promoting alternatives, the coalition has produced a thorough analysis of options that exist for hazardous waste management and a position paper that it will be trying to get politicians to accept in this election year. Members say Governor Hughes has agreed to meet with them to consider setting up a task force on alternatives.

Alternatives to landfills include promoting changes in industrial processes, perhaps with tax credits, so as to produce less waste; recycling and reuse of wastes, and treating them to reduce their volume or reduce their toxicity.

None of these is simple or cheap and, between landfill crises, they tend to fade from sight.

Copies of the coalition's alternatives report are available from the Baltimore Environmental Center, 333 East 25th street, Baltimore, Md. 21218.

Using your mother

St. Marys City—The scientist was

talking about managing the Chesapeake Bay, reviewing the dozen or so major categories encompassing man's myriad activities on the estuary—shipping and waterfront development, power plant cooling, fishing, military bombing ranges.

The bay folksinger and poet in the audience couldn't hold it in any longer.

"I feel like we're talking about the 12 best uses of our mother," Tom Wisner blurted out. "We need to explore our whole mentality of use ... think more about our relationships with the bay than how to use it."

Lots of viewpoints, and plenty of time and space in which to discuss them; and no pressure to discuss them at all, if you'd rather go eat a steamed crab.

This was the eighth summer here at St. Mary's College for the Johns Hopkins University's delightful, week-long Alumni College, which combines vacation with intellectual stimulation, focusing on subjects that in past years have ranged from concepts of leadership to particle physics.

This summer the subject was the Chesapeake Bay, or rather, the many Chesapeake Bays. A week hardly sufficed to consider them all.

There was the Chesapeake of Jerry Schubel, former Johns Hopkins oceanographer and a geologist, who sees the estuary as a rather ephemeral phenomenon, winking in and out of existence every hundred thousand years or so between epochs of glaciation and rebounding sea level.

Dr. Schubel said while man must proceed with caution, some fiddling with some parts of the bay might be all right and beneficial to us. As an example, he cited disposing of dredged spoil in its deep channels, which appear to be devoid of much marine life, since they already turn oxygenless each summer (a largely natural phenomenon).

The Annapolis painter of waterfowl scenes, John Taylor, knows the bay as a place of unique light, a "misty gray pearliness"; and from the canoe trips he takes in search of inspiration, he can talk about every twist in dozens of marsh creeks better than you could give directions to your home.

To Alex Kellam, a storyteller from Crisfield, the bay is a rich source of characters like "old Cap'n Fudd," who knew the bay so well, they say, he bet his crew that, blindfolded and locked below in a cabin, he could tell where they were just by smelling the

The Neighbor No One Wants: Maryland's Search for a Safe Dump Site for Toxic Wastes

By HARRY JAFFE

Special to The Washington Post

The state of Maryland is looking for a few good pieces of land.

They should be about 500 acres in size, near a divided highway and far from heavily populated areas. Tight soils, especially clay, are highly desirable. Any spot in a major watershed, wetlands or where water flows just beneath the surface is out.

The right parcel gets the prize: a hazardous waste dump.

For the past year, a crew of geologists, consultants and specialists with the Maryland Environmental Service (MES) has been combing the state for at least one disposal site for an estimated 300,000 tons of hazardous waste generated each year by Maryland industries, mostly clustered around Baltimore. The experts are midway through the process of winnowing out unsuitable land, but no specific dump sites have been named yet. **JUL 16 1981**

Early indications are that Montgomery County may be spared because of possible danger to the water supply, and because of its extensive park land and densely populated areas. On the other hand, nearly a quarter of Prince George's County is still in the running. **Wash. Post**

Choosing the sites is a game of elimination with potentially deadly consequences. "Toxic waste" evokes horror stories about PCBs, Love Canal and derailed freight cars spilling carcinogenic chemicals in populated areas.

Last year at this time, clouds of white poisonous vapors leaking from a chemical waste drum forced the evacuation of 150 students from the University of Maryland's chemistry building. Just the application last August by a New York firm to construct a toxic waste facility near Laurel provoked a buzz saw of opposition.

And while final choice of a site is a year and many public hearings away, the fear of lethal chemicals and the unseen threat associated

with toxic wastes already has some sections of the state up in arms.

Cecil County, nervous because of its proximity to Baltimore's chemical plants, has threatened to sue the state if the disposal site winds up within its borders.

Betty Violet, who lives in the small town of Rohersville in Washington County, has been organizing her community for the past month. She knows the state workers in Annapolis have not picked a spot, but CATCH (Citizens Against Toxic Chemical Hazards) will keep them out of her neighborhood, she hopes.

"We feel the poison and chemicals would get into our water supply and they're essentially indestructible," she said. "And if it gets into our water, pretty soon it will show up on dinner tables in Washington, because we're right at the mouth of the Potomac." **Wash. Post**

In Montgomery and Prince George's, environmental planning specialists reported that state workers have contacted them at least twice. **JUL 16 1981**

"At this point, we haven't received any sites to react to," said Dominic Motta, principal environmental planner for the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission in Prince George's County. "I'm sure there will be plenty of reaction when they are announced."

With two of four review stages finished, nearly all of Montgomery County has been eliminated from further scrutiny, and the remaining regions hug heavily populated areas north of Washington. State geologists and engineers first reviewed environmental features last fall. The entire western half of the county and most of the northern sections were counted out as potential toxic waste sites because water supplies might be contaminated by the wastes. All park lands, which also dominate Montgomery County, were withdrawn. **JUL 16 1981**

Maps published after the second level of scrutiny depict remaining potential areas that include Be-

thesda, Silver Spring, Wheaton and regions extending north to Sandy Spring. Ann Sloan, the MES staff specialist directing the site search, predicted those areas also would be withdrawn because of the population density. **Wash. Post**

David Sobers, the Montgomery environmental planner, said some county land around an existing sludge landfill on Ednor Road might have qualities suitable for the state facility.

In Prince George's, a broad swath of land from the Bowie area cutting diagonally south and west past Andrews Air Force base to the Virginia border has been eliminated by state searchers, but other pockets in the north and east remain as potential waste sites.

Populated areas around Cheverly and Bladensburg probably will be removed from consideration, according to Sloan, but a region on both sides of Rte. 301 from Kidwell's Corner to Wells Corner together with another area further south are likely to remain past the third elimination round.

When the state reaches the point of suggesting actual sites, as it's expected to do by the end of the summer, Sloan promised public hearings in each of the affected counties.

"We really think the risk to people around the facility is negligible," said William Sloan, Ann's husband and the person in charge of MES's study of where and how much waste is generated. "It's smaller than driving to work or smoking."

The Arthur D. Little consulting firm, which studied the situation, paints a different picture, however. After outlining threats of fire, explosions, polluted drinking water and contaminated food as some risks associated with disposal of toxic wastes, the consultants said many problems can be overcome, but concluded: "Nonetheless, the buried wastes are expected to remain hazardous forever. The potential risks (type of event, likelihood that it will occur, and severity if it does occur) are presently unknown."