

9/13
Date

Subject

Underground fissures may delay Hawkins Point landfill opening

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Lense is so extensive that it restricts moving or cutting off portions of the cell.

The Hawkins Point project has been plagued with delays since it was chosen as a hazardous waste site last year. Initially it was scheduled to open in May, then state officials said mid-July would be the earliest completion date. Recently, just before the sand lense problem was discovered, the scheduled opening was early January.

Another potential and significant delay in the completion of the project could stem from the Environmental Service decision to use a synthetic liner in addition to the natural clay base. Nelson has ruled that despite structural weaknesses in the clay base, the synthetic liner is not a "necessary modification." By doing this, Nelson has avoided a lengthy public hearing process that is required of all necessary modifications.

Nelson acknowledged that his interpretation was "open to question" and said a citizen group probably could challenge the decision, arguing the synthetic liner was forced on Environmental Service because of weaknesses in the natural clay liner.

An additional problem with synthetic liners, whose safety has been a constant source of debate, is that they must be put down in temperatures of 40 degrees and above. Nelson said a cold winter could delay application and set back the entire project.

Any delay in the completion of the Hawkins Point facility beyond January is considered critical by state environmental officials because of the scheduled Jan. 1 closing date of the Browning-Ferris Industries Solley Road landfill, where all the state's hazardous substances now are dumped.

Nelson said if the state is without a hazardous waste landfill for a considerable length of time, generators of toxic substances in Maryland will be forced to transport wastes to out-of-state facilities, the closest of which are in New York and North Carolina.

During the four-week shutdown of the Solley Road facility in June, several companies were forced to consider closing because of the higher transportation costs.

The Waste Management Administration and Environmental Service officials disagree over the extent of sand lense problem and the corrective action that should be taken.

In a lengthy report submitted last week to the health department, the Environmental Service concluded that, for the most part, the natural clay liner was impermeable and the possibility of contamination "extremely remote."

The Environmental Service contends that, because pressure in the sand lense is "positive," meaning that water is forced up, it is unlikely that any pollutant can enter through the lense.

"The stability of the clay liner is there," said David Rudich, the service's project coordinator for Hawkins Point. "At the most, what we'd have to do is excavate two or three feet and put in some granular material. It shouldn't take much time or cost."

However, since the health department grants the permit, it has the final word on the engineering required at the site. Nelson said this decision would be based less on the exigencies of the hazardous waste disposal problem in Maryland and more on what safeguard will provide the greatest protection against groundwater contamination.

"...open," said Ali. "...I never had

Hawkins Point Landfill/Landfills

THE Evening Sun

Name

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Hawkins Point

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Fissures could delay the

By Mark Arax

Evening Sun Staff

State health department officials have discovered design problems with the proposed Hawkins Point hazardous waste landfill that could mean significant delays in its completion and higher construction costs, according to Ronald Nelson, director of the Waste Management Administration.

Nelson, whose agency is reviewing designs of the landfill and will decide whether to issue a state permit, said geologists recently found evidence of extensive fissures in portions of the protective clay liner at the north end of the planned facility.

Left uncorrected, the fissures, or sand lens, could result in contamination of groundwater supplies leading to the Patapsco River.

Nelson said the sand lens affects plans for the one disposal cell now under design and scheduled for completion in January. That cell will have a disposal life of one year and will be the first of four cells built on 35 acres of property owned by the Maryland Port Authority.

The Hawkins Point landfill, which also includes plans to expand an existing chrome ore facility on 10 acres of Port Authority property, will have

a total disposal life of seven to 10 years.

Nelson said the sand lens in the natural clay liner originates near the shore of Thoms Cove and appears to merge and extend below the planned disposal cell. Because of the potential for hazardous substances to trickle through the sand lens into underground water supplies, one of three safeguards will have to be taken to strengthen the cell, Nelson said.

Until further investigation of the cell, Nelson said he is unsure which safeguard he will recommend to the Maryland Environmental Service, the state agency designing and operating

opening of Hawkins Point landfill

the \$13 million facility.

Nelson said he was also unable to estimate the delays or costs associated with each option. He said the problems probably will not result in the state's denying a permit for the Hawkins Point site.

"This sand lens is more extensive than we initially thought. The clay wall against Thoms Cove is just not as strong as we'd like it," Nelson said. "Our goal for opening was January, but I don't know if we'll make it or not. The problems may or may not result in a significant time delay."

"But this is not all that unusual," he said. "You hope you don't see this

happen and you hope your original data was correct, but none of this is insurmountable."

According to Nelson, the three options being considered are:

- Remove the portion of the cell that contains the sand lens. This would be the least costly and time-consuming but would result in decreased capacity of the cell. Since this first-built cell only has a one-year capacity and subsequent disposal cells could take a year to construct, the state might find itself temporarily without landfill space if this option is chosen.

Move the cell up or over to avoid

contact with the sand lens. Nelson said this option would be costly and result in delays because it entails a virtual redesign of the cell. He said, however, it would be less costly and time-consuming than option three.

- Excavating the sand lens and replacing it with gravel and clay. A clay wall would be built against Thoms Cove and an additional leachate collection system would be installed to capture any groundwater. This is probably the most time-consuming and costly option, but it may be the only one available if the sand

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Hawkins Point: no more 'paradise'

HAWKINS, From B1

They say they have been pushed out by industrial pollution, and that they have no choice but to accept the city's offer for their property.

Mongure Ali, president of the Hawkins Point Community Association, said residents suffer from bladder infections and coughs but there is no proof that their ailments are caused by chemicals from surrounding industries that include the SCM Corp.'s Glidden paint plant, Eastalco, U.S. Gypsum, W.R. Grace and Brown-Ferris.

A brown dust eats away the paint of homes and cars, Ali said, but the state health department has never determined the source of the dust. "We have no choice but to move," Ali said.

Ali said he was so dissatisfied with the city's offer that he tried to sell his property through a realtor, asking \$165,000 for two houses and two acres. He has taken his property off

the market, convinced he won't get a buyer because of the city's relocation plans.

Like most of his neighbors, Ali won't say what the city offered him, only that it was "very low." The community has been divided between those who have accepted the city's offer and those who are holding out. Those who are holding out acknowledge that, in the end, they probably will take the money and their memories and move, rather than live in a ghost town.

The city agreed to pay \$27,000 to \$60,000 for the land and homes of 16 properties settled on as of last month. The way Ali and many of his neighbors figure it, the governor appropriated \$1.5 million for the relocation of the Hawkins Point neighborhood and all that money should be used for the residents there.

But Robert F. Ferguson, the city's assistant relocation director, said that's not how it works. "You don't take \$1.5 million and divide it by

number of homeowners and that's what they should get."

He said by law the city must give the residents up to \$15,000 more than the market value of their home for a replacement house, plus settlement and moving costs. Unused money will remain with the state, he said.

While the residents complain that what they were offered was not enough for their homes, Ferguson said, "They can't get a better deal. We've done something wrong if they can't buy a new house equal to the one they had with the money we give them."

But, Mr. Thomas complained, "You're getting nothing for the roots and the peace you have here. They can relocate the homes but they can't relocate the neighborhood."

The city is aiming for June 30 to complete settlement in the neighborhood, but Ferguson said no one will be forced out.

But residents say they are feeling the pressure to take the offer before it is withdrawn, knowing they won't

be able to sell their homes once everything around them is leveled.

"I'm trying to get out of here," said Fred O. Blagmon, who has lived in his home since 1947 and remembers walking to Fort Armistead beach and returning two hours later with two bushels of crabs. "I can't find anything with what they're giving me."

Residents preparing to move lament the approaching departure.

"This place will be history to a lot of people, but to me it's still home," said Sylvia Thomas, 49. "I'm glad my mother and grandmother and great-grandmother aren't here to see this."

"I can remember every detail of the way this neighborhood used to be. It's something I'll never forget, never." But, she said, once she leaves she'll never come back.

"To see what industry has done to the place I've lived in all my life is too painful," she said.

"It's hard to say goodbye to yesterday. But I have to look ahead and leave the past alone."

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Vernon and Sylvia Thomas stand before their Hawkins Point home, soon to be bought by the city because of pollution.

By William Hotz—Evening Sun Staff

Hawkins Point: no more 'paradise'

By Jeanne Garland
Evening Sun Staff

Emotions run high these days in Hawkins Point, a neighborhood preparing to dissolve.

Most of the 23 families living along the country road now surrounded by industry and landfills have been there four generations and remember the community as a "paradise," before progress and pollution moved in.

These days they are taking their last looks at the place where most of them grew up and sadly imagine the trees and gardens and the homes of their friends and relatives leveled and buried under topsoil and grass.

The city, using state funds, hopes to purchase most of the homes by the end of June. Most of the residents are expected to leave by the time the Hawkins Point hazardous waste landfill goes into operation at the end of the summer. The residents are leaving reluctantly.

"The city's offer is a sham, it's a joke. The people were not justly compensated," said Sylvia



The Evening Sun

Thomas in a voice shifting from anger to sadness. "This place was a paradise. You wouldn't have believed it—fresh air, ponds, fish, fruit trees."

"Then the factories started moving in and squeezing you tighter. Now there's nothing to do

but look for a little cleaner place to live," said Mrs. Thomas, recalling the gnarled, deformed vegetables produced in the last garden she planted three years ago. She said she threw away the vegetables, fearing harmful chemicals in the land or air caused the deformities.

Her husband, Vernon, 63, a retired truck driver, said he remembers dumping loads of chemicals about a mile from the neighborhood in the 1950s, before they were married, before there were controls. When he moved into his wife's childhood home, Mr. Thomas said, "I thought I found paradise." Industry, he said, strangled what he had known as "country livin' in the city."

But most of the families say they plan to be gone by the end of the summer because of the accumulation of industries in the area that has destroyed the quality of life in their 100-year-old community. Adding a hazardous waste landfill and a city sanitary landfill within two miles of their homes, they say, has pushed them to the brink.

See HAWKINS, B12, Col. 1