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Horton, Tom

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# Hawkins Point dump, once wanted so badly, will fold

by TOM HORTON

Just two years ago, Maryland's need for a new hazardous waste landfill seemed urgent enough that the state paid \$1.5 million to relocate an entire neighborhood from Hawkins Point in South Baltimore.

Yesterday the state announced that for lack of enough hazardous waste to make the landfill even marginally profitable, it was closing it within 60 days.

Reactions of the displaced residents ranged from talk of demanding to be moved back to threats of lawsuits against the state.

"There is some anger, because that was

our heritage there for over a century," said Sylvia Thomas, whose home was one of the 23 bought out by the state.

"A lot of us feel the whole landfill thing was just a ploy to get us out . . . that they want to put condos and marinas there . . . extend the Inner Harbor," she said.

Mary Rosso, a neighbor of the landfill and a leader of the Maryland Waste Coalition, which opposed Hawkins Point, said the closing left her with "mixed emotions."

"We fought it from the beginning. . . . Then we began to have an impact, to get them to make good changes to make it a state-of-the-art landfill; and now it's all going back to a

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**RICHARD GARDNER**

less safe landfill in Pennsylvania somewhere," she said, referring to the planned ex-

cavation of what little waste was put at Hawkins Point in its nine-month life. "It's just a bizarre situation," Ms. Rosso said.

What went wrong at Hawkins Point?

For starters, it appears likely the state overestimated the amount of hazardous waste its industries were producing.

Using a study by the Arthur D. Little Company done in 1981, the state has assumed that industries, mostly in the Baltimore area, produce about 100,000 tons of hazardous waste annually (that excludes another 100,000 tons a year of toxic chrome ore wastes from a single Allied Chemical factory in Baltimore, which are put in a separate landfill in another

part of Hawkins Point not affected by the closing).

But more recent data compiled by the state health department, shown last week to a gubernatorial hazardous waste advisory task force, indicated the actual amount of non-Allied Chemical waste may be less than half the 100,000-ton assumption on which the Hawkins Point landfill was based.

"The Arthur D. Little report said there was this huge need [for handling hazardous waste], and I think everyone just accepted it," said Richard Gardner, a lawyer for the Ches-

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"A lot of us feel the whole landfill thing was just a ploy to get us out," says Sylvia Thomas, who is shown with husband Vernon in file picture at their former home on Hawkins Point road.

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apeake Bay Foundation and a member of the advisory group.

The potential market for the Hawkins Point landfill was further restricted by state policy decisions that it would handle only certain types of hazardous waste, and only those produced in Maryland.

The effect of this, according to William Sloan, director of the state Hazardous Waste Siting Board, was that less than a third of the non-Allied Chemical waste produced in the state was acceptable at Hawkins Point under the conditions of its permit.

Ironically, as Hawkins Point closes for lack of business, a firm called Solid Tek, from Amherst, N.Y., has filed notice with the state that it is looking for a site to open a private hazardous waste landfill in Maryland.

The reason the proposed new private landfill may be profitable when Hawkins Point is not is that it would be able to take all kinds of waste, and not just from this state, Mr. Sloan explained.

Another faulty assumption that led the state to open Hawkins Point was an analysis that showed the landfill could operate profitably by charging waste dumpers \$40 to \$60 a ton. "It was not even close to what turned out [\$85 or \$90 a ton]," said John R. Griffin, the state's deputy secretary of natural resources.

That has been the immediate reason for the closing announced yesterday — bigger, older landfills in other states, not built to the expensive new

environmental standards of Hawkins Point, have taken its business, charging Maryland waste dumpers around \$60 a ton, including transportation.

Mr. Griffin, who was a gubernatorial aide in 1981 when the Hawkins Point project was conceived, noted there was considerable pressure for a landfill at the time because the state's last two private hazardous waste landfills (Joy-Boehm and Solley Road, both in Anne Arundel county), were either closed or close to being closed.

Of the decision to press ahead with Hawkins Point, he said: "sometimes you are on the mark, sometimes you aren't. We weren't."

Another factor that appears to have developed faster than the state anticipated has been the movement of industries away from using landfills.

"They are scared to death of their liability [under new, tough federal and state hazardous waste laws]," said John D. Seyffert, head of the Maryland Environmental Service, the quasi-public agency that operates Hawkins Point.

"Almost to an industry, all waste generators in Maryland are doing something on their own to reduce hazardous wastes, either through recycling and recovery, or process changes."

Indeed, in addition to closing Hawkins Point, Maryland has as much as said that the facility will never again be used for hazardous waste from any firm in the state except Allied Chemical.