

QUIZ QUESTION

What product can New Jersey claim to be the number one producer of in the entire United States?

No, it's not tomatoes, it's hazardous chemical wastes.

Congratulations.



Our Opinion

Another Love Canal?

It is an unenviable fact that New Jersey leads the nation in the production of chemical waste. But somehow, we always assumed it was never "our problem" in suburban North Jersey. The horror stories of possible hazards and potential contamination and disease always seemed to filter out of some other part of the state.

Ironically, as the nation marked Ground Zero Week to protest the spread of nuclear weapons, Wayne found itself in the midst of its own chemical waste problem. Almost 30 years ago nearly 20,000 pounds of radioactive thorium were buried near Sheffield Brook, an area off Black Oak Ridge Road. The thorium, which was dumped by a now-defunct chemical plant, was discovered last November and was reported in TODAY at that time. Since then little has been done by the township to rectify the problem.

Last week concerned residents who live in the area of Sheffield Brook presented petitions to the council asking the township to expedite the removal of all contaminated material.

The township in turn called in a spokesman for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission who told residents that there was no immediate health hazard and that the commission did not have the funds to remove the radioactive material.

The council's only action was to draft a letter to the president of the company which dumped the thorium, and ask for its removal.

We feel the safety of residents should be Wayne's utmost concern. It's been almost six months since the discovery of the radioactive material and nothing has been done except to draft a letter. We agree with Councilwoman Joyce Amabile who called for the immediate removal of the thorium. Officials have no idea what effect the radioactive material can have on children who have been exposed to it and many play in the area of Sheffield Brook. It could effect them or pose a latent threat in their genes to their children.

Although officials have minimized the situation, we feel any chemical waste poses a health hazard. The fact that Sheffield Brook water may eventually find its way into reservoir waters poses a potential health hazard for all of northern New Jersey that boggles the mind.

We urge the officials of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Wayne Township and the chemical company to work together to insure the health and safety of Wayne residents by removing the radioactive thorium immediately.

Wayne can ill afford to become another Love Canal.

Residents seek nuke waste cleanup

BY RICK CHALERT

WAYNE — Residents in the area of Sheffield Brook, concerned about radiation levels in the stream, will appear before the township council tonight to petition the governing body to remove toxic waste dumped in the area more than 30 years ago.

Mayor Walter Jasinski Monday said he expected the residents will also express their thoughts concerning the problem and have questions about the waste's danger. The

mayor also said he invited John Kinneman of the Nuclear Regulatory Agency (NRC) in King of Prussia, Pa., to the meeting to answer any questions the residents might have.

Low levels of radiation, believed to be emanating from an area behind the former W.R. Grace and Co. building on Black Oak Ridge Road, were discovered last year. The township contacted the NRC to ask what can be done to remove the material. Instead, the agency took a

survey of the area and found no measurable radiation contamination, either on the land or in Sheffield Brook. In a report to the township, the NRC said, "Although these radiation levels do not pose any immediate hazard to the health and safety of individuals living near or frequenting the areas around the stream, additional surveys and evaluations seem appropriate. The results of these surveys will be used to determine if additional actions are required."

The NRC, the report goes on, has contracted an outside firm, Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU), to perform the additional studies. The survey will involve walking across the ground to measure surface radiation levels and collecting surface and subsurface soil samples. The surveys will be performed primarily in the brook and the weeded areas along its banks. Results will be made public once complete.

The same letter to the township was also mailed to residents in the affected area, which includes Black Oak Ridge Road, Pompton Coorsroad, Farmdale Road, Longport Road and Deerfield Road. In addition, the residents received a permission slip for allowing the NRC to conduct surveys on private properties. The testing is slated to begin either later this week or early next week.

According to an historical sketch of W.R. Grace, the company began processing monazite sand at the Black Oak Ridge Road facility in 1948 to extract thorium and rare earth elements. It is possible that the work was done under a contract with the Atomic Energy Commis-

sion, (AEC) the forerunner of the NRC. In 1954, the AEC issued Grace's license authorizing the possession, transfer and use of the thorium at the site. The operation continued until 1971.

The processing produced large quantities of waste containing residual thorium and Grace asked a consultant to decontaminate the site in order to meet AEC criteria for unrestricted use at the business. The company sought release of 1,500 pounds of material that was slightly contaminated with thorium and was granted the request. The waste was buried at the site in 1974. Previously, an additional 19,000 pounds of thorium was buried at the same location.

Council moves to clean up nuclear waste

WAYNE—Residents living in the Sheffield Brook area were given some assurance Wednesday that toxic thorium waste buried in the area will be cleaned up. The council unanimously passed a resolution requesting that the nuclear residue be removed from the former site of W.R. Grace and Co. on Black Oak Ridge Road. The resolution contains an amendment authorizing Township Clerk John O'Brien to send a letter to the company's president asking that the company remove the material.

The council action came following three hours of discussion on the matter between the governing body, the residents and representatives of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

One area resident, George Yassenchok, presented the council with a petition, signed by 173 people, asking the council to take immediate action to remove the waste. Yassenchok said that when he first learned of the problem, he contacted the NRC and was assured there was no health hazard. Still, Yassenchok continued, he had concerns about the nuclear waste emptying into the brook, including the immediate danger, an illness pattern in adults and children, characteristics of the water table and how the material is buried.

Another area resident, Randy Freeman, said that during the past two years, two children living in her neighborhood, behind the former Grace property, have contracted leukemia and another child of cancer. A third resident said he had to undergo surgery for the removal of a malignant tumor from his colon.

John Kinneman, of the NRC, told the residents that surveys of the brook and surrounding area must still be undertaken to determine if any immediate health hazard exists and how large a quantity is buried on the property.

Both Kinneman and Frank Cosolito, DEP bureau chief for radioactive material, told parents not to allow their children to play near the brook, although no significant radiation levels have been detected along its banks.

Residents also questioned how the thorium migrated from the Grace property into the brook. They also wondered whether the waste will eventually travel into the Pompton River, into which Sheffield Brook empties.

Kinneman said that one study to be made this summer will survey the migration of the chemical. The study will also determine if some thorium was illegally dumped by Grace along the brook's banks.

The thorium, according to Kinneman, was probably buried in bulk and not in containers. The material is believed to be soluble. "If it was soluble, it would have been flushed out years ago," said

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The council sought immediate removal of the waste, saying that further studies would prove too costly. "It would be quicker and cheaper if we took immediate action," said Councilwoman Joyce Amabile.

Council President Joseph DiDonato asked what could be done by the township should the NRC and DEP determine that the thorium need not be removed.

The solution in this case, according to Township Attorney Paul Cavaliere, would be to institute a suit against the property owner or go to the state attorney general's office for help.

Further studies slated along Sheffield Brook

Nuke waste no threat, official says

BY RICK GALERT

WAYNE — An official of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) said Friday that deposits of radioactive waste discovered along the banks of Sheffield Brook do not pose a threat to area residents.

John Kinneman said that preliminary surveys taken by the

agency found that radiation levels in the area were low but measurable. He explained that by the end of this month, further surveys will be taken by an NRC subcontractor to determine "what kind of material is in the area and how big a problem it is." Kinneman said that the waste seems to be fixed in an area along the

stream's banks.

"At the moment, there is no radiation danger to the residents as far as we can see," Kinneman said, adding that the extra studies will determine whether the material will be moved and how it will be removed from the area. "Until we take the additional surveys, it will be hard to

speculate how the waste should be taken from the area," Kinneman stated. "If the soil is saturated with the waste, the best removal method would be digging."

The radioactive waste was first discovered last year when it was believed that chemical material was buried during the late 1950s and early 1960s in a field behind the former W. R. Grace and Co. building on Black Oak Ridge Road. Township officials believe that the waste has leached into the soil and flowed into Sheffield Brook, which runs from the property to the Pompton River.

Councilman David Waks said that the council received a letter from Business Administrator John Leidy last week concerning the problem. An aerial survey taken of the area, Waks said, showed a slight increase in radiation levels, however ground surveys produced no significant results other than normal

background radiation from television receivers. The ground surveys were taken along Black Oak Ridge Road, Pompton Crossroad, Farmingdale Road, Deerfield Road and Longport Road. Waks also said there was no measurable contamination in the brook.

The letter, said Waks, stated that the contamination poses "no immediate hazard" but explained that additional surveys and measurements will be taken.

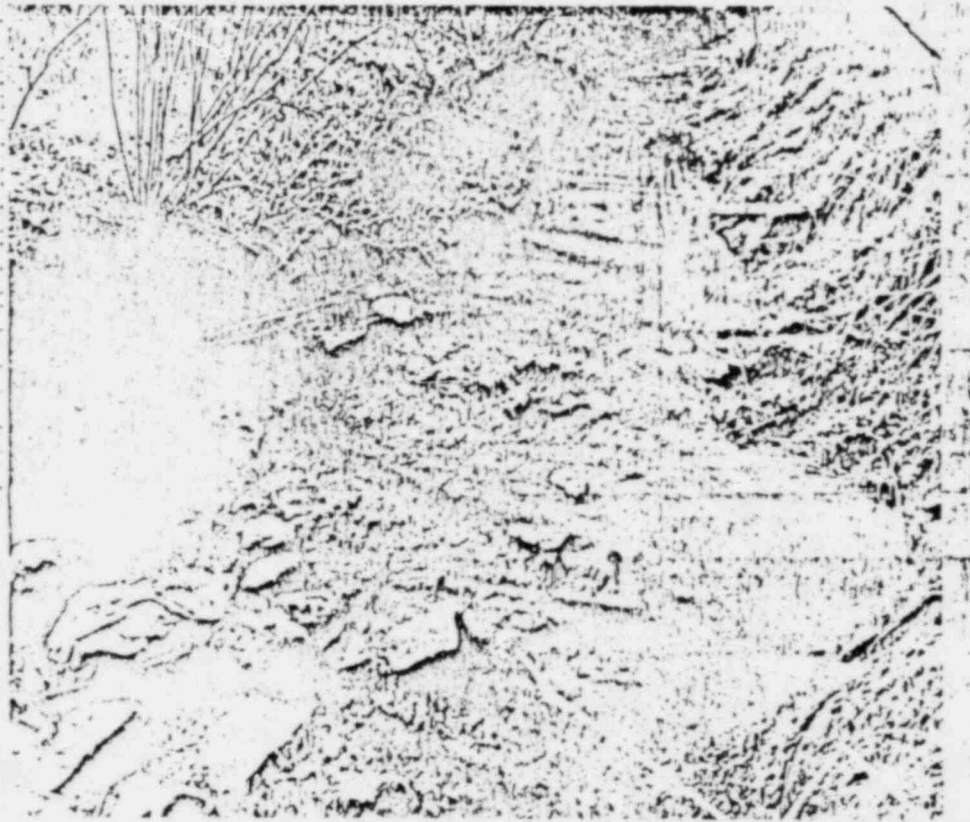
Waks said he wrote to the NRC when the waste was first discovered last year asking that some action be taken to solve the problem. "I asked them if the material was properly buried," Waks said. "As a result of that letter, they came and took surveys." The helicopter surveys were taken by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

The Fifth Ward councilman said

he wasn't concerned about the surveys of the area at the time he wrote his letter to the NRC. "All I wanted to know was how to go about getting the material out of town," Waks said.

Apparently, the councilman said, the NRC asked the DEP if New Jersey had any old contracts with the Atomic Energy Commission which might explain why the material was dumped in Wayne originally. The Atomic Energy Commission was the forerunner of the NRC.

Waks said he was still awaiting a reply on that question and added, "We don't know if the government will remove this waste." The councilman further said that the township may have to enter into a lawsuit in order to remove the waste. "That could be costly," he said. "But I don't want that stuff lying around in Wayne, whether it's low level or not."



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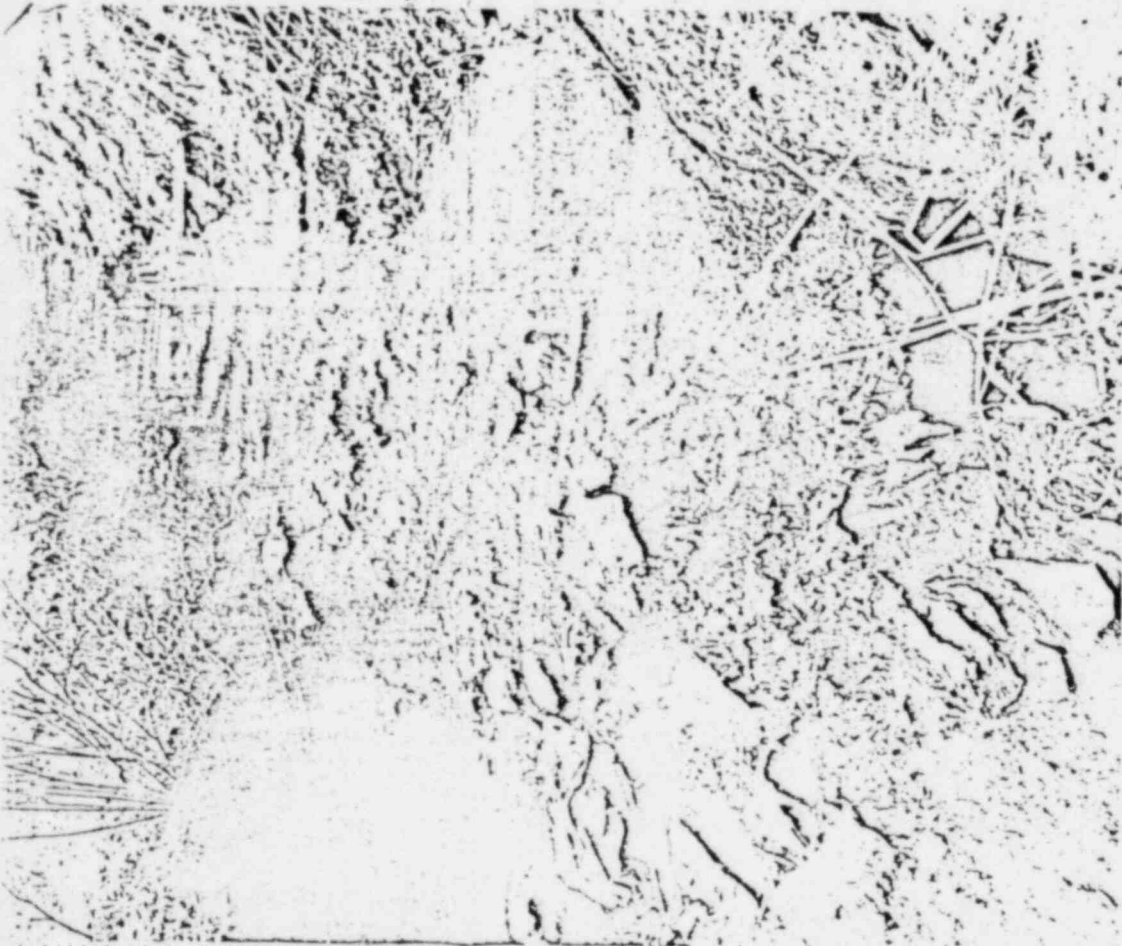
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RADIOACTIVE WASTE SOURCE—Low levels of radiation have been discovered along the banks of this stream, Sheffield Brook, which flows near Farmingdale Road. Although an official of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission says the radiation

does not pose a health hazard, some township councilmen want the area cleared of all waste, believed to have been dumped in the area about 25 years ago. (TODAY photo by Klaus-Peter Steltz)

Lakeland — a special section in The News today -- Page 31



Your Town Today

• Antique show coming to Wayne
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Thorium link to A-bomb project possible

By DONNA VENTIMIGLIA

Staff Writer

WAYNE — The company that buried thorium near Sheffield Brook may have been involved in federal projects that led to the development of the atom bomb, a spokesman for the company said yesterday.

Edward Heymann, general manager of public relations and advertising for the W R Grace Co.'s Davison Chemical Division, said his firm was involved in contracts with the government during the 1950s. The contracts may have included the Atomic Energy Commission's continuation of the Manhattan Project, the top-secret federal

project that ultimately led to the development of the atom bomb.

"Some of the work done was on the Manhattan Project," Heymann said. He added, however, that a fire in the company's plant destroyed "lots of files," so confirmation of the involvement in the project may be difficult.

The company took over operations of the plant in 1954 and continued the processing of monazite ore and extraction of thorium done by Rare Earths Inc., the previous owners, Heymann said. It is uncertain at this time whether Rare Earths Inc. contributed to the commission, which began to expand and conduct additional research

Inspectors test for radiation — Page 19

started by the Manhattan Project. There are 19,000 pounds of radioactive thorium buried on the site of the chemical plant.

See THORIUM, Page 4



NEWS REPORTER Kevin Coughlin begins his journey tomorrow.

Reporter turns nuclear

7

THORIUM

Continued from Page 1

Low levels of radioactivity have been detected along the banks of the nearby Sheffield Brook.

The commission, now called the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, began tests of the area Tuesday. It expects to finish the survey by the end of the week. Results of the testing, which include sampling soil, water and vegetation, as well as drilling, will be available in about two or three months, said a committee spokesman.

John D. Kinneman, an official with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in King of Prussia, Pa., said his office was investigating the possibility of Grace's involvement in nuclear projects like the Manhattan Project. If the federal government is involved, it might then have the responsibility of removing the thorium.

"From my own knowledge, I think it's true. The work they did was probably extracting thorium," Kinneman said.

The Manhattan Project was a code name in the 1940s for the overall project that produced the atom bomb. The government contracted work with hundreds of chemical companies all over the country. In 1946, the project was taken over by the Atomic Energy Commission, which Kinneman said, researched and expanded what the project started. The commission worked on improving weapons and building nuclear reactors.

Kinneman's office is interested in Grace's involvement because the burden for removal of the thorium, should that be necessary, will then be placed on the federal government.

"If they (Grace) did work on the project, the government might then have the responsibility to remove it," Kinneman said.

The commission and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection have indicated that funds are unavailable for the removal of radioactive wastes.

Heymann also said his company would wait to review the test results to determine whether it would bear the financial responsibility. The company, he said, buried the thorium near the plant and may not be responsible for the thorium that rests near the brook. Heymann also stressed that at the time of Grace's purchase of the building, the company was in compliance with regulations for burying the thorium.

The bulk of the work done by the chemical plant involved the manufacture of polishing products and gas lanterns, Heymann said.

W R Grace is a worldwide company and the Davison division — specialty chemical manufacturers — has eight plants in the United States and Canada.

Heymann said the plant in Wayne was unique because it extracted thorium.

FALKLANDS

Continued from Page 1

and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told Parliament the 9,000 Argentine troops on the Falklands "will then be totally isolated."

Officials said she told her cabinet she was running out of patience and would not leave the storm-battered British fleet inactive in the South Atlantic much longer. The fleet reportedly arrived within striking range Wednesday night.

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