

Lowell Sun Feb, 7 1985

# No threat of contamination from rusty water: engineer

By CHRISTOPHER SCOTT  
Sun Staff

WESTFORD - Rust-colored water covering wetlands near several of the town's wells on Cold Spring Road doesn't pose the threat of contamination, a Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE) sanitary engineer said yesterday morning.

Mark Begley, a senior sanitary engineer with the DEQE regional office in Worcester, also said a 55-gallon drum with a chemical name printed on it found near the rusty water was probably used either to control traffic access to the landfill or to transport refuse.

Two nearby residents, Joanne Barnett, 47 Pine Ridge Road, and Christine Pude, 7 Bayberry Road, told selectmen Tuesday night that while on a walk near

the town wetlands they observed surface water that was a "deep rusty color" and a 50-gallon drum with the chemical name 'trichlorethane' printed on it.

They told selectmen they were concerned that the rust-colored water posed a serious

## Westford

threat to the nearby wells and that the drum might be evidence of illegal dumping.

Executive Secretary Paul Alphen said selectmen instructed the town's hazardous waste coordinator Denis Lawler and sanitary landfill engineer George Wyman to "get together and learn more about the label."

"But this is the first time any of the selectmen or anyone here (town hall) has heard about it," Alphen said.

Begley said the rust-colored water near the landfill "isn't unique." It is characteristic of a landfill which isn't lined, he said.

A periodic inspection of the landfill on Jan. 29 by DEQE Inspector James Williams revealed water was percolating through the landfill refuse and leaching iron oxide (rust) into the lower wetlands. "It's been like that for years," Begley said.

"It's unfortunate, but this goes with any landfill that isn't lined and that's near wetlands," Begley added.

Begley said the drum that was found on the site doesn't indicate any illegal dumping because the top was cut off, leading him and Williams to believe it was used either to mark an access way or to transport refuse.

"It could have been years since that chemical (trich-

lorethane) was contained in that drum," he said. "If there was midnight dumping there, the top of the barrel wouldn't have been cut off."

The wetlands, Pude said, are less than 500 feet away from the wells in question.

Barnett said yesterday, "As we got close to the wetlands, we noticed the water was a deep rusty color."

"The area, was so contaminated it wasn't even frozen," she said.

Pude said: "The whole area was a mess, but what stood out the most was the red, rusty water covering the surface of the wetlands. And it wasn't even frozen at this time of year."

Pude said scattered throughout the area were tires, cans and the "usual mess." The "stench of burning garbage" permeated the area.

# Letters to the editor

## Band fund-raiser success

Last week marked the close of the Westford Academy Band's second annual calendar drive. Thanks to you, the people of Westford, the band's fund-raiser was very successful.

The money raised will be used in financing a trip to Glens Falls, New York, in March for an exchange concert with the Glens Falls High School Band.

If you ordered a calendar and have not yet received it, contact Mr. Blair Bettencourt at 692-2611 during school hours.

Thank you for your support.

Miriam Langner

## NOTE - Dispute landfill article

The Westford Eagle on Feb. 7 reported on a matter concerning DEQE and the town well area adjacent to the landfill. The headline stated: "DEQE refutes claims of wetlands pollution."

I would like to set the record straight by correcting inaccurate statements in the article.

On Jan. 31, Joanne Barnett and I, Chris Pude, stopped by the landfill to compare landmarks to a map we had obtained from the Assessor's office. We are part of a group called Westford Concerned Citizens (WCC), which is actively campaigning to close the landfill and stop construction of a waste transfer station at the landfill site.

While at the landfill, we decided to look at the wetland area by the town wells. DEQE inspector James Williams had inspected the area on Jan. 29, and had reported back on the condition of the wetlands.

While at the wetlands near the edge of the landfill, we noticed that a large drum had been tipped over and one end of it was laying in the water.

The top of the drum was NOT cut off, and could not have been

used to transport refuse to the landfill as speculated by DEQE. Furthermore, a chemical label was attached to the top (not the side) of the drum. We carefully removed this label so that people in our group could use it to investigate the chemical. The condition of the label indicated to our group that the barrel had been at the landfill for less than a year.

On Feb. 5, we presented this information to the Board of Selectmen. The label indicated that the chemical was 1,1,1 trichloroethane. We also reported on what appeared to be concentrated and widespread contamination of the water in the wetlands adjacent to the landfill. We showed the Selectmen pictures taken in 1981 of the same area, and stated that the condition of the wetlands today is just as bad, if not worse, than the 1981 pictures indicated. We did not make any claims about illegal dumping, nor did we offer any speculation about how the drum came to be at the landfill.

The Feb. 7 article in the Westford Eagle quoted DEQE Engineer Mark Begley as saying that the water was contaminated by "rust". However, Mr. Begley did not indicate whether the water has been tested in order to confirm this.

It is the understanding of our group that although the town well water is tested bacteriologically each month, the water near the landfill has not been tested for toxic chemicals since January of 1983. We believe that the town's drinking water is a vital concern to all, and that it certainly should be tested more often than every two years.

There is an excellent article in the January issue of Reader's Digest about the contamination of public well water. The article indicates that 29 percent of the public wells recently, tested by

the EPA showed some degree of contamination. It would seem that Westford should be especially concerned about its well water, since some of its wells are located less than 500 feet from an unlined landfill which has existed for more than 80 years. While dumping regulations have been improved during the past few years, dumping was not regulated very well during the earlier years. In fact, it is anyone's guess as to what might be buried down there, and it might be just a matter of time before hazardous contaminants leach their way to the town well fields - if they haven't already.

Let's test the water for toxic chemicals now. Also, let's cap-off and properly seal the landfill to protect our water. Let's permanently close the landfill area for any use, including that as a waste transfer facility. Let's dump the dump!

Christine Pude  
7 Bayberry Road

## Road issue complexity

The issues surrounding Texas Road are far more complex than the article in last week's Eagle implied. Our concerns are over what work should be included in betterments and that everyone who benefits from this pays a fair share.

The Planning Board approved Texas Springs I at the end of a town accepted access road. The residents of Texas Road attended Planning Board meetings after this construction had begun, to notify the Board of the damage that was being done to the road by the heavy construction vehicles. At this point, the drainage problem was so bad that the Planning Board directed the developer's engineer to draw up plans for a drainage system. These plans were examined and only slightly altered by the Highway Superintendent prior to the

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# SPECIALLY INHIBITED 1,1,1-TRICHLOROETHANE MULTI-PURPOSE GRADE

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SEE APPROPRIATE "ETHYL TECHNICAL BULLETINS" FOR DETAILS.  
MEETS U.S. FEDERAL SPECIFICATION O-T-620-C AND INTERIM AMENDMENT 1 (GSA-FSC)  
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## WARNING! VAPOR HARMFUL

- USE ONLY WITH ADEQUATE VENTILATION
- AVOID PROLONGED OR REPEATED BREATHING OF VAPOR
- AVOID PROLONGED OR REPEATED CONTACT WITH SKIN
- DO NOT TAKE INTERNAL MEDICATIONS
- STORE IN COOL, UNCOVERED LOCATIONS
- KEEP BUNGES

VAPOR CAN BE FATAL. THIS SOLVENT CAN BE USED WITHOUT HARM IF PRECAUTIONS ARE STRICTLY OBSERVED. VAPOR IRRITATION AND DIZZINESS ARE SIGNS OF INADEQUATE VENTILATION AND DANGEROUS CONCENTRATION. RESPIRATORY PROTECTION MUST BE USED IN UNVENTILATED SPACES. UNPROTECTED PERSONNEL MUST BE EVACUATED IMMEDIATELY. DO NOT CONTAMINATE WITH WATER. DO NOT USE IN OPEN SPACES.

AVOID EXPOSING CONCERNED VAPORS TO FIRE, SPARKS, OR OTHER IGNITION SOURCES. REFER TO MANUFACTURER'S PROCEDURE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

SEE THE FOLLOWING U.S. PATENTS: 2,611,252; 2,838,458; 2,923,747; 2,970,115; 3,049,571.

*Household Pollutants guide*

Chemical	Ratings of			Cancer-causing	Mutation-causing	Products Containing Chemicals
	Disaster Potential fire	Acute Effects explosion	Chronic Symptoms			
Polyethylene glycol	mod. --	--	--	yes	X	fabric sizing
Propylenedi-chloride (dichloropropane)	dang. dang. --	severe	--	X	X	shoe cleaner/ conditioner
Sodium carboxy-methyl cellulose	--	--	--	produces neo-plasm	X	fabric sizing
Toluene	dang. mod. mod	severe	--	yes	X	dry-cleaning agent, spot remover
1,1,1-trichloro-ethane	--	dang. --	severe	X	X	cleaning fluid, shoe coloring, patent leather polish, spray shoe shine
Trichloro-ethylene	slight, dang. --	severe	yes	yes	X	shoe cleaner/ conditioner, dry- cleaning agent
Xylene	dang. --	mod	severe	produces neo-plasm	X	shoe dyes

• mod - moderate dang - dangerous -- - no information  
 X - not tested CNS - central nervous system

Source: "Scoring of Organic Air Pollutants Chemistry, Production and Toxicity of Selected Synthetic Organic Chemicals" (McLean, Va.: Miure Corp., Sept. 1976).

# Questions surround investigation of toxic materials barrel at landfill

By Colin Hickey

A state agency's claim last week that there was no evidence of wetland contamination from a discarded steel drum near the town landfill has not settled the concerns of some residents.

Discrepancies surfaced this week in information supplied about the drum by the state Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE). The drum carried a label indicating it contained the toxic chemical 1,1,1-trichloroethane.

That agency also has refused to allow the Eagle to interview a DEQE employee who visited the site of the suspected wetland contamination.

The barrel was discovered by Westford residents Chris Pude and Joanne Barnett last week, who

then informed selectmen about it. The two women disputed a statement to the Eagle by Mark Begley, a senior sanitary engineer from DEQE Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste, that the lid was missing from the barrel.

The cap was off, not the entire lid, Pude said. Begley has subsequently said that he assumed the lid was off after reading DEQE employee James Williams' report stating the drum was "open."

In an interview with the Eagle this week, Begley said the drum that was discovered could have had a lid.

In an interview last week, Begley said he had

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## Wetland questions persist

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been to the wetland site, but when asked specifically when he had last seen the wetland, Begley said it was spring of last year.

Williams conducted a DEQE investigation of the wetland near the landfill shortly after the barrel was discovered. The Eagle has been unable to verify his account of the wetland investigation, which was reported to the Eagle second hand.

Begley said it is DEQE policy that new employees not talk to the media. DEQE public affairs representative Myles Brown confirmed it has been a "long time policy" for questions from the media to be handled through the public affairs officer or regional DEQE supervisor. He said DEQE believes this is necessary because "a certain amount of expertise" is needed to answer most questions put to the agency.

He added, "This is the policy of most agencies."

Westford Highway Superintendent George Wyman, meanwhile, removed a drum from the wetland area by the landfill last week. Wyman said he did not believe it was the one discovered by Pude and Barnett because he had understood from DEQE statements that the drum was missing a lid.

He confirmed it was found in the same area where the 1,1,1-trichloroethane drum was reported to have been.

Begley told the Eagle last week that the drum probably was used as a trash can for several years before being dumped in the wetland.

Tuesday Begley said it was "not untypical to have drums at a landfill" and that they were often used for traffic control.

Both Pude and Barnett have said they are concerned that Begley's statements make their concerns about contamination appear unfounded. "We feel we have legitimate concerns," Pude said in an interview this week.

Barnett said Williams told her that DEQE would send Westford a violation notice in regard to the running of the landfill.

When questioned about the notice, Begley would only say, "There is a correspondence that has been drawn out" concerning the landfill that will be sent to the town.

In the meantime, both Pude and Barnett are deeply concerned about possible contamination of the wetland and believe tests should be performed. Town Hazardous Waste Coordinator Dennis Lawler said so far "no tests have been done," but added this does not indicate tests won't be done.

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