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EDITORIAL / OP-ED / COMMENTARY / LETTERS

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Pesticide too dangerous for crops in state (*San Francisco Chronicle*)

Sunday, June 13, 2010
The strawberry fields, once thought to be forever, soon could be laced with carcinogens. The state Department of Pesticide Regulation has proposed registering methyl iodide, a toxic fumigant, for use in California. Methyl iodide is used to rid the soil of insects, weeds and pathogens. The idea is that strawberry and nursery stock growers would use it in place of methyl bromide, which is being phased out because of its role in ozone depletion.
Clearly, we need to phase out methyl bromide. But the problem is that methyl iodide is so much worse.

"It's used in labs to induce cancer," said Megan Buckingham, a program associate with Californians for Pesticide Reform. "All along, the science has been quite clear that this is a very dangerous chemical."

Buckingham is right. The strange thing is that the department knows exactly what methyl iodide is. A scientific review panel that the department commissioned to do a study of methyl iodide argued that it was too toxic for California: that it endangered farmworker and community safety and could contaminate groundwater.

The department proposed approval anyway.

To the department's credit, the chemical had already been (controversially) approved by the federal EPA. And the department did impose stricter provisions on its usage in California than the EPA did. Methyl iodide handlers in California will only be allowed to have one-fifth of the chemical exposure as their counterparts in the rest of the country. Application rates in California will be lower than allowed in the rest of the country. And "buffer zones" in California - designed to protect the many communities that abut strawberry fields - will be larger.

"There's been a very rigorous process that's been going on for many years, and I think California has done a great job in assuming safety for the population," said Mark Murai, president of the California Strawberry Commission. "The consumer can be confident that any new product goes through a stringent process of review."

Murai also pointed out that, thanks to the EPA, the chemical is in use in most other states in the country.

Well, sort of. Most other states in the country don't grow strawberries. How can California compare the experience of other states when 90 percent of the nation's strawberries are grown within our borders?

This is our state's $2 billion industry, our state's concern, and our state's health. And just because the EPA approved a toxic chemical doesn't mean that consumers have to do so.

And what a toxic chemical it is: In addition to being used in labs to induce cancer, methyl iodide is known to cause late-term miscarriages, which would certainly affect strawberry workers and possibly the people who live near strawberry fields. (Strawberries tend to be grown in coastal areas in California, so there's no way the fields wouldn't affect large communities.) It's known for wreaking havoc with the thyroid glands.

"It kills absolutely everything, as far as the soil goes," Buckingham said. "But there's a high cost for that."

Is this a price Californians are willing to pay?

We bet not, and we bet that other Americans aren't willing to pay it, either. Although methyl iodide is applied to the soil that strawberries are grown in rather than the berries themselves, this new chemical isn't a great advertisement for eating strawberries. It would be a shame for California to adopt methyl iodide over scientific objection, only to be met with revulsion by consumers.

Plus, Californians' health is more important than the strawberry industry's money. The strawberry commission points out that soil disease is a growing problem, but there are time-tested ways to successfully combat it. Farmers could rely on solarization, biological controls and crop rotation. If farmers don't want to rely on these proven methods, they could wait until scientists develop alternative fumigants - which they're in the process of doing right now. Either way, methyl iodide is the wrong chemical for California, and the Department of Pesticide Regulation should rescind its proposal.

http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/06/13/EDT11DTF3O.DTL

This article appeared on page **N - 10** of the San Francisco Chronicle

Susquehanna River looks better, but ... (*Harrisburg Patriot News*)

Published: Sunday, June 13, 2010, 3:30 PM Updated: Saturday, June 12, 2010, 11:06 PM

The Susquehanna River is not on an endangered list any longer but there are still concerns about the waterway.

It was just five years ago that the Susquehanna River was at the top of a national conservation group’s list of most endangered rivers.

This year, it did not even make the list put out recently by American Rivers, the D.C.-based environmental group.

With this news we should throw a party along Riverfront Park, right?

Not so fast.

American Rivers says there still could be troubled waters. While the overall health of the river does seem to be improving, there are still threats from other waterways that share a watershed with the Susquehanna and from things many of us might do without thinking about the river's health.

Fortunately, the potential problems that caused the Susquehanna to rise to No. 1 on the list are not issues any longer.

At the time, the federal Environmental Protection Agency was looking at a plan to allow untreated sewage to go directly into the river from wastewater treatment plants.
The other threat was an inflatable dam at a hydroelectric station in Wilkes-Barre.

No decision has yet been made on the dam and fortunately, the untreated wastewater idea was scrapped thanks to federal Clean Water Act requirements. Because of those rules, municipalities such as Lemoyne are upgrading their wastewater treatment facilities.

We in the midstate also should be pleased to know nutrient and sediment levels have gone down, and the Susquehanna River Basin Commission says that is because people are more aware of what is flowing into the river.

This is a good news.

But bacteria levels still have been a problem and that means everyone must be vigilant. Hot weather has sometimes meant tests showing high levels of bacteria — enough to occasionally close City Island's beach.

So, what can we all do to help keep the river off the list?

People need to think about the herbicides and pesticides they use. They should not mow right up to the edge of the waterway and should never throw grass clippings into the river.

Beyond that, however, there is a potential threat that midstaters can't control.

The waterway at the top of American Rivers' list this year is the Upper Delaware River that runs through Pennsylvania and New York. It shares a watershed with the Susquehanna.

Upper Delaware is No. 1 because of concerns related to the natural gas extraction in the Marcellus Shale region and the wastewater generated during the process of reaching the gas.

This provides a word of caution to government entities that the impact of natural gas extraction wastewater — if it is not properly processed — could have wide-ranging implications.

Louisiana coast,EPA site in Alexandria demand careful handling (*Alexandria Town Talk*)

June 12, 2010
You'll really need to coordinate your schedule this weekend. The Louisiana Corn Festival takes over Bunkie in Avoyelles Parish all day today and Sunday; and the annual Melrose Arts and Crafts Festival is doing the same at Melrose Plantation, 40 miles northwest of Alexandria. At 8 tonight, "America's Got Talent" contender Taylor Mathews is on the concert lineup for a party at Buhlow Fun Park in Pineville. Plan accordingly, and pack some bottled water. The
weekend promises to be fun, hot and humid.

Elsewhere in the news, at least one scientist is optimistic that Louisiana's coast will recover quickly from the oil spill, and U.S. regulators plan to take an Alexandria site off of the agency's Superfund list. Our views follow:

CRUDE OIL PUMPING into the Gulf of Mexico since April 20 will not destroy Louisiana's coast, according to Edward Overton, professor emeritus of the School of the Coast and Environment at Louisiana State University. Overton projects recovery in three to four years -- after the leaking Deepwater Horizon well is capped. The scientist, speaking Thursday in Baton Rouge, urged aggressive skimming to capture as much oil as possible before it hits the coast. Once it touches shore, he said, it will be important to let it degrade and disperse naturally to avoid further damage.

WE THINK: Although people will find it difficult to sit on their hands, we suspect the professor is right: Once the oil is on shore and in the marshes, great care must be taken so additional damage is not done by people and machines. It's already a grim sight, and the urge to get in there and "do something" is strong. We need to be smart.

MONDAY IS THE DEADLINE for the public to comment on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's plan to de-list the former Ruston Foundry property in Alexandria as a toxic Superfund site. If the EPA receives no adverse feedback that requires action on its part, the regulatory agency will de-list the site as of July 13, 2010.

WE THINK: Citizens should share their thoughts about the site and the cleanup. Send e-mail to
Katrina Higgins-Coltrain at coltrain.katrina@epa . gov; or send a fax to (214) 665-6660.

AIR

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Washington digest: EPA moves on greenhouse gas admissions (*Herald Democrat)*

Story also appeared: *Las Vegas Review Journal*

BY STEVE TETREAULT
STEPHENS WASHINGTON BUREAU
WASHINGTON -- A Senate vote last week allowed the Environmental Protection Agency to move forward with new rules to regulate greenhouse gas emissions.
Senators voted 53-47 to set aside a resolution that would have stripped the EPA of its authority to set controls for carbon dioxide and other gases that contribute to global warming.
Specifically, the resolution by Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, would have overturned a 2009 EPA finding that greenhouse gases are hazardous to human health.

Such a finding allowed the agency to invoke the Clean Air Act as a basis for further action. It has proposed that large emitters like oil refineries and coal-fired power plants be subject to further regulation.

The debate showed a Senate split over how to proceed on climate change, even as a majority say they recognize its dangers. Six Democrats joined Republicans to support the Murkowski resolution.

EPA rules would create "an economic train wreck," Murkowski said. She argued that Congress and not bureaucrats should take the lead in crafting energy and climate policies.

But Democrats accused Republicans of being disingenuous as many of them are opposing far-reaching climate change legislation. The vote raised questions whether the Senate can pass a comprehensive strategy on climate change that President Obama has urged.

Democrats said the Murkowski resolution ignores the science that says carbon emissions are dangerous.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman, an independent from Connecticut said, "unchecked carbon dioxide emissions endanger human health and welfare. Frankly, I thought that debate was over. Climate change is happening. The science is convincing. The current pattern of energy consumption is just making a bad problem worse."

Sens. John Cornyn and **Kay Bailey Hutchison**, both R-Texas, voted for the Murkowski resolution, as did **Sens. Tom Coburn** and **James Inhofe,** both R-Okla.

When is the Senate going to act on climate-energy policy? (*Examiner*)

June 12, 9:48 PM · JoAnn Blake - DC Policy Reform Examiner
This week the Senate rejected a resolution that would have blocked the EPA from enforcing the Clean Air Act to reduce global warming pollution. That was a positive development for the environment. The Supreme Court had instructed the EPA in Massachusetts v. EPA (2007) to determine if greenhouse gases threaten public health and the EPA returned an endangerment finding.

The "disapproval resolution," drafted by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), was a step backward and would have stopped action required by the Supreme Court. Sen. Murkowski reasoned that "politically accountable members of the House and Senate, not unelected bureaucrats, must develop our nation's energy and climate policies."

Okay that route is preferred by both sides of the climate debate, but the Senate is not moving forward on these policies; there's no indication it will in the near future. So thank goodness for the EPA's emissions-reduction policy that will save millions of gallons of oil. It's been a year since the House passed Waxman-Markey and there hasn't been a vote on Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass) and Joe Lieberman (I-Conn) climate bill called The American Power Act.

And now this past week Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind) introduced a different bill that would promote energy efficiency and renewable fuels, but not put a cap on carbon. It appears the Senate doesn't have the 60 votes for a comprehensive climate policy to save the Earth and is moving in the direction of a modest energy policy.

Meanwhile, 71 percent of Americans support federal regulation of greenhouse gases, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll. The BP Gulf oil spill shows us the need for prompt update of drilling regulation and a new path to a clean energy future. Yet the Senate can't put together a consensus. What will it take to get some action?

06/11/2010

EPA: WM funding suffers from Phoenix pollution (*White Mountain Independent*)

By: Sean Dieterich , The Independent
WHITE MOUNTAINS - Although the White Mountains has purer and cleaner air than some other areas of the state, it can still suffer because of findings from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding Phoenix's air pollution.

The EPA announced May 25 that it rejects Arizona's claim that dust storms caused the high pollution readings in Phoenix in 2008. The decision could impact transportation funding for the state.

According to the EPA, PM-10, or coarse particulate matter, is the main air pollution problem facing the Valley. The White Mountains appears to have a generally higher air quality, as the area is pretty clear in all EPA air pollution measurements; PM-10, nitrogen dioxide, ozone (both one-hour and eight-hour standards), PM-2.5 and sulfur dioxide.

Under the Clean Air Act, states submit plans to the EPA showing how they will meet air quality standards for certain pollutants. In a press release, the EPA says Arizona is currently not meeting the national standard for PM-10, which is one-seventh the width of a human hair. The EPA says major health concerns from PM-10 exposure include effects on breathing and respiratory systems, damage to lung tissue, cancer and premature death. The elderly, children and people with chronic lung disease, influenza, or asthma are said to be especially sensitive to the effects of particulate matter.

Arizona had asserted that dust storms were responsible for ten of the eleven unacceptably high pollution spikes in Phoenix during 2008. Jared Blumenfeld, EPA regional administrator, says their findings show this is not the case.

"After thoroughly reviewing the state's data, EPA air quality scientists determined that a legally significant number of pollution spikes were not the result of regional dust storms," he said in the press release. "Therefore, the 'exceptional events' were not supported by the science."

"We're not saying the dust storms don't contribute to the pollution," said Niloufar Glosson, EPA policy analyst in San Francisco, Calif. in a phone interview. "The difference is what is acceptable and what can be controlled."

Glosson says the EPA's concern is the increase in air pollution is due to the rock and gravel industry and agriculture kicking up PM-10. She says the EPA has noted that the PM-10 levels on the West 43rd Avenue monitor can be tied to nearby industrial facilities, that levels rise as those facilities begin work for the day.

"On these four particular days of high pollution, these were not regional dust storm days," she said.

While Glosson says the number of air pollution exceedances over the past four to six years in Phoenix has come down, more stringent controls of PM-10 may be necessary.

"The controls have to deal with the cards you have dealt," she said. "For Phoenix, (because of the desert) it's dust. "It's not a reason to not address the human health impacts."

The finding of PM-10 in Phoenix will require EPA to start disapproval of Arizona's air quality control plan. If a final disapproval is rendered, federal transportation funds to the state could be frozen. In that case, the EPA says transportation funds would be withheld until the state submits an adequate air quality plan to them.

The freeze, however, would not affect current approved transportation plans and projects.

"I want to acknowledge the collaborative work that ADEQ, the Maricopa Association of Governments, Maricopa County and the City of Phoenix have done to address existing sources of PM-10," Blumenfeld said.

EPA says they are committed to continuing to provide Arizona, as well as regional and local agencies, technical expertise, monitoring equipment and funding to bring the state into compliance. The federal government, the EPA says, already provides $30 million annually to Arizona through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program. These funds have been, and can continue to be, used to reduce PM-10 emissions.

*Reach the reporter at sdieterich@wmicentral.com

Bill to curb EPA fails in Senate (*Natural Resources Report*)

Posted By admin On June 12, 2010 @ 5:00 am
Murkowski Resolution Fails to Make it Through Senate Floor
By National Association of Wheat Growers [1]
A disapproval resolution introduced by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) failed to move forward in the Senate on Thursday after hours of long-anticipated debate on the merits of greenhouse gas regulation. Murkowski's resolution would have negated the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) 2009 finding that greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare – a finding that obligates the Agency to regulate those gases under a 2007 Supreme Court ruling.

Versions of a disapproval resolution, a rarely-used procedure outlined in the Congressional Review Act, have been introduced on this issue in both the House and Senate. Had the Senate measure been approved, it would have faced a House vote and a threatened veto from President Barack Obama before becoming law.

In other climate and energy news, analysis was expected from EPA this week on a climate and energy proposal introduced by Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.), but release of that data has been delayed until early next week. It is unclear if the EPA analysis will shed new light on the bill's actual provisions or simply expand on past analyses of climate change-related ideas.

Democratic leaders also reportedly met this week to discuss the merits of attempting to move forward with any climate or energy legislation. Senators, at least, have a multiplicity of ideas to pick and choose from, with another energy proposal added to the mix this week by Sen. Dick Lugar (R-Ind.).

NAWG staff members and the NAWG Environment and Renewable Resources Committee continue to follow the development of energy legislation that could move through Congress this session. The NAWG Board has established net economic benefit as a requirement for support of any greenhouse gas-related legislation or regulation, and NAWG signed on to a number of letters in support of the Murkowski and other disapproval proposals.

For more on this issue from NAWG, please visit www.wheatworld.org/climatechange.

EPA Must Be Stopped Soon (*The Intelligencer*)

POSTED: June 12, 2010
"EPA Must Be Stopped Soon"
A resolution that could have stopped or at least delayed the Environmental Protection Agency's assault against coal was rejected Thursday by the U.S. Senate - but by a narrow vote. Forty-seven senators agreed with the measure while 53 voted against it.

Among those voting "nay" on the proposal were Sens. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., and Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio. Sens. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., and George Voinovich, R-Ohio, voted in favor of the resolution, sponsored by Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska.

Previously, Rockefeller had indicated he would vote in favor of the Murkowski resolution, which would have had the effect of rejecting EPA proposals concerning greenhouse gases. Rockefeller pointed out the EPA plan, if carried through, would be devastating to the coal industry and thus, to West Virginia. He took the reasonable position that the agency should not be permitted to take such action without the approval of Congress.

Brown previously had indicated he would vote against the Murkowski resolution, claiming Congress "should not legislate scientific findings." Brown's defense is ludicrous; Congress does that very thing regularly.

Byrd defended his vote on various grounds. He pointed out that President Barack Obama had threatened to veto the Murkowski resolution, even if it passed. And Byrd added he was unhappy the resolution was brought to a vote with no opportunity for amendments.

We disagree with Byrd, and more vehemently with Brown. Frankly, we do not believe Brown is on the side of Ohioans who will be hurt if the EPA proceeds with its assault on coal.

But Byrd may have another chance to vote in favor of clipping the EPA's wings, at least temporarily. Rockefeller also has introduced a measure to limit the agency's power concerning greenhouse gases - but only for two years, giving Congress time to debate the issue.

We urge Rockefeller to expedite his proposal - and we urge Byrd to support it. The EPA simply must be stopped. Time to do so is running out.

Senators divided on EPA vote (*Parkersburg News*)

By JESS MANCINI jmancini@newsandsentinel.com
POSTED: June 12, 2010
Email: "Senators divided on EPA vote"

PARKERSBURG - West Virginia's senatorial delegation was on the opposite sides of a bill that would have overturned a finding by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that greenhouse gases are a health threat.

Sen. Jay Rockefeller voted in favor while Sen. Bob Byrd was opposed.

Proposed by Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, the Murkowski resolution of disapproval, which could have prevented the EPA with proceeding with plans to reduce emissions that could lead to global warming, such as the emissions from cars or coal-fired electric plants, failed 47-53 with Republicans in the Senate voting against. Byrd and Rockefeller are Democrats.

Overturning the EPA's "endangerment finding" is an assertion that climate change or global warming doesn't exist and dismisses existing scientific facts, Byrd said.

"This in essence is like voting to assert that there is no climate change or global warming going on, and to dismiss scientific facts that already exist. As I have pointed out before, to deny the mounting science of climate change is to stick our heads in the sand and say 'deal me out," Byrd said.

"Finally, mark my words, the regulation of greenhouse gasses is approaching, whether done by Congress or by regulation, despite naysayers who rail about the non-existence of climate change," he said.

Rockefeller, chairman of the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, said he voted in favor to rein in EPA's authority and protect West Virginia's economy and security.

"I have long maintained that the Congress, the elected voice of the people - and not the unelected EPA - must decide major economic and energy policy," he said. "It is our job - because we represent the people of this country. We are accountable to them."

Also, Rep. Shelley Capito, R-W.Va., said the resolution was directed at agency regulation, rather than congressional legislation, to impose stringent restrictions on carbon dioxide emissions.

"Although this vote failed, it is an important first step to letting EPA know that they cannot unilaterally set an agenda without the buy-in of the American people," Capito said. "Members of Congress who represent coal areas must stand up and let EPA know that when making any decision they must take into account the real cost to families, their livelihoods, and plans for the future.

BP SPILL

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BP May Lose U.S. Oil Leases, Contracts as Gulf Spill Punishment (*BusinessWeek*)

June 13, 2010, 7:20 PM EDT
By Jim Efstathiou Jr. and Jeff Plungis

June 14 (Bloomberg) -- BP Plc may lose control of its U.S. oil and natural gas wells and be barred from doing business with the federal government as punishment for the worst oil spill in U.S. history, industry and regulatory analysts said.

President Barack Obama and lawmakers are debating penalties that would cripple the company's ability to do business in the U.S. as public outrage intensifies. In addition to BP's culpability in the Gulf of Mexico spill, a 2005 explosion at BP's Texas City refinery that killed 15 workers and a 2006 pipeline leak that dumped 200,000 gallons of crude at Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, will figure in the debate, said Michael Wara, associate professor of environmental law at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California.

"The government weighs whether there is a pattern and practice," Wara said. "They'll consider whether BP runs these incredibly complicated systems, where accidents can and sometimes do happen, or whether the company has a culture that disfavors safety and environmental compliance."

The U.S. may revoke BP's status as operator of producing wells in the Gulf of Mexico, such as Thunder Horse, or of leases at Prudhoe Bay, said David Pursell, a managing director at Tudor Pickering Holt & Co. LLC, a Houston investment bank. Separately, Congress is considering measures to bar BP from contracts with the Department of Defense and Environmental Protection Agency.

Escrow Demand

Lawmakers including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi are demanding that BP defer the payment of any dividends until fishermen and others are compensated for losses from the spill. BP should set up an escrow account to cover claims, Obama aide David

Axelrod said on NBC's "Meet the Press" yesterday. The spill's cost may reach $40 billion, Standard Chartered Bank estimated last week.

BP's board is meeting today. It's unlikely to make any announcements until Chairman Carl-Henric Svanberg meets with Obama on June 16 in response to a request from the administration, according to two people familiar with the matter. Chief Executive Officer Tony Hayward is scheduled to appear before the House Energy and Commerce oversight panel the following day.

The administration has the power to force BP out as operator of existing leases on federal lands and offshore tracts. The operator, typically the partner with a majority interest, is designated before drilling begins. The Interior Department tracks each operator's performance and may "disapprove or revoke your designation as operator" based on accidents, pollution events or other cases of noncompliance, according to federal regulations.

'Good Chance'

"We think there's a good chance the government not only doesn't allow BP to operate going forward, but could rescind operating control," Pursell, an oil specialist, said in an interview. "It's a way to keep BP alive and a way for the government to say we've really done something to penalize BP."

Such a move would force BP to sell part or all of its interest in some of its most profitable oil and gas fields, said Michael McKenna, president of MWR Strategies, a consulting firm in Washington. Other partners in a lease are unlikely to take on the risk of being the operator without also taking the lion's share of profits, McKenna said. Even if BP breaks even on the sale of its stake, it would lose the profits from future oil production.

"It's exceedingly possible and exceedingly unwise," McKenna said. "You engage in the economic deterioration of a company that's already under stress."

Oil Pollution Act

"The BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill raises several fundamental questions about safety and about industry's ability to respond to spills," Kendra Barkoff, a spokeswoman for the Interior Department, said in an e-mail. She declined to say if the administration may revoke BP's operator status.

BP also faces a fine of as much as $4,300 for each barrel of oil leaked under the 1990 Oil Pollution Act, said David Pettit, a senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council in Los Angeles. That may mean a bill of as much as $8.6 billion based on more than 50 days of oil spilling at a rate of up to 40,000 barrels per day.

David Nicholas, a BP spokesman, declined to comment on possible U.S. sanctions. “It’s not the sort of thing that we would react to,” Nicholas said in an interview. “Clearly throughout the response to this event we have been working extremely closely with the administration and we continue to do so.”

Shares Plunge

BP shares have fallen 44 percent since the explosion, wiping out about $73 billion in market value. Investors buying the so-called put options are wagering that the shares will extend their drop from $33.97 and slash $140 billion from BP’s market value, according to U.S. stock-options trading.

In addition to the Deepwater Horizon rig that exploded and sank in April, BP operates the Gulf platforms Thunder Horse, the second-largest producing well in the U.S. at about 300,000 barrels per day, and Atlantis, which produces 200,000 barrels of oil a day. BP also operates the Prudhoe Bay oil field on Alaska’s North Slope.

Representative Luis Gutierrez, an Illinois Democrat, will write Interior Secretary Ken Salazar urging him to ban BP from future lease sales because of the company’s “abhorrent environmental and safety record,” said Gutierrez spokesman Douglas Rivlin.

“Oil leases are a license to print money, said Rivlin. “Why should we be giving them to these guys?”

EPA Sanctions

The EPA can disqualify companies convicted of Clean Water Act or Clean Air Act violations from receiving federal contracts or financial assistance, according to an agency e-mail responding to questions. Those penalties apply to individual facilities, not an entire company, it said.

BP’s facility in Prudhoe Bay and its Texas City refinery are already under EPA sanctions. Negotiations to lift them were suspended after the Deepwater Horizon explosion and leak, the agency said.

The EPA declined to discuss details of the current investigation into the Deepwater Horizon spill.

“We are taking all the steps necessary to enforce our laws and to ensure that the responsible parties pay for the cost of cleaning up the spill,” the agency said.

Last month, Gutierrez successfully pushed through an amendment to a broader Defense Department bill requiring the secretary of defense to review whether BP is a “responsible” contractor.

Debarment Option

If BP doesn't meet that standard, which includes having a "satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics," the legislation would require Secretary Robert Gates to bar the oil giant from defense contracts, according to Gutierrez's office.

BP has six contracts with the Pentagon worth a combined $2.1 billion, mostly for fuel.

In a letter last week, the consumer group Public Citizen called on Obama and Gates to "debar" BP from all government contracts and terminate the six Pentagon agreements.

"It's a pretty disturbing pattern in the company," Tyson Slocum, director of Public Citizen's energy program, said in an interview. "There has to be a point when a financial slap on the wrist is no longer adequate."

Debarment is "definitely not an extreme option," said Robert Meunier, former EPA debarment officer who is now head of Debarment Solutions in Arlington, Virginia. "It's been used against 70,000 individuals and businesses. It's fairly routine," even if the public never hears about it, he said.

"While debarment makes for good politics, it makes terrible public policy," Meunier said. "But you'd have to be a fool not to consider it when the president is saying he's looking for somebody's ass to kick."

--With assistance from Jim Snyder in Washington and Laurel Calkins in Houston.
Editors: Joe Winski, Mark Rohner

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Posted on Sun, Jun. 13, 2010
Editorial:

Well blast's message (*Philadelphia Inquirer*)

The blowout and spill at a natural-gas well in central Pennsylvania shows the need for tougher monitoring and better communication between regulators and drillers.

It also shows the wisdom of a proposed severance tax on this burgeoning industry, a portion of which would pay for cleaning up hazardous sites.

The accident in rural Clearfield County was bad, but it could have been much worse. No workers were hurt and no homes were damaged when the well operated by EOG Resources Inc. blew out June 3, sending a gusher of natural gas and drilling fluid 75 feet into the air.

The gusher leaked for 16 hours before a containment team capped the well. By that time, an estimated 35,000 gallons of drilling fluid had spilled onto the ground.

Some of the chemical-laced fluid seeped into groundwater and a small stream. The state Department of Environmental Protection ordered the Houston-based company to suspend operations for up to 30 days while the agency investigates what went wrong.

For some reason, the pressure of released gas and drilling fluid overcame a mechanical "blowout preventer" - shades of the BP oil spill - and the spewing began.

One lesson from this accident must be clearer lines of communication between drillers and state officials when an emergency occurs. EOG Resources should have notified authorities more quickly when it lost control of its well.

The blowout occurred about 8 p.m. DEP Secretary John Hanger said EOG employees first attempted to call his agency about two hours later, but got the voice mail of a DEP employee who was on vacation.

The drilling company also left a message at a DEP office, but it was closed for the night. Hanger said EOG should have called DEP's 24-hour emergency hotline.

EOG employees eventually called the local 911 center, which contacted state officials. Prompt notification is important to protect public health and safety, and place independent observers at the accident site as soon as possible.

The number of natural-gas wells in Pennsylvania is growing rapidly, yet it's the only major drilling state without a tax on production.

A proposal by House Democrats, supported by Gov. Rendell, would raise about $142 million annually from drillers. Of that total, $21 million would go to local municipalities affected by drilling.

About $7 million would go to an environmental stewardship fund, $3.5 million to a county conservation fund, and $900,000 annually to a hazardous cleanup fund.

So lucrative are the state's gas deposits that Royal Dutch Shell recently paid $4.7 billion for one Pennsylvania drilling company with extensive leasing rights.

Yet the industry and Senate Republicans continue to promote the fiction that a severance tax might drive drillers out of the state.

It's beyond senseless not to require drillers to pay a severance tax. Not only should they pay for extracting a valuable natural resource, but it will help to cover the costs of responding to emergencies.

Gulf oil spill, energy bill likely to focus on drilling, not climate (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*)
Story also appeared: *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, *New York Times*

WASHINGTON -- Images of gushing oil and dying pelicans in the Gulf of Mexico have stirred anger and agony in Washington. But are they enough to prod the Senate to act on long-delayed clean-energy and climate-change legislation?

Energy, maybe. Climate, probably not. There is growing sentiment for a measure that penalizes BP, imposes higher costs and tougher regulations on offshore drillers and takes some steps toward reducing overall energy and petroleum consumption.

But despite the outrage over the spill, there appears to be limited appetite in the Senate for a broad-based effort to cap greenhouse gas emissions across the board.

Enacting that kind of legislation will require a grand bargain involving greater nuclear plant construction, concessions to the coal and utility industries, exemptions for major manufacturers, and more, not less, domestic oil and gas drilling to attract Republican and moderate Democratic support.

A coalition of 60 votes needed to overcome a filibuster is not yet in sight. In the words of Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a Republican who worked on a climate change bill for months before pronouncing it hopeless, "There's nowhere near 60 votes to save the polar bear."

President Barack Obama has said that the time has come to put a price on carbon dioxide pollution, and he vowed to find the votes for it this year. On Thursday, reacting to the defeat of a Republican plan to block the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating climate-changing emissions, the president again cited the urgent need to pass clean-energy and climate legislation.

Behind the scenes, however, his advisers are working on a more modest package of energy-saving measures that stop well short of an effort to cap carbon emissions across all sectors of the economy.

Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada, the Democratic leader, has also signaled that he is open to patching together a series of limited energy measures rather than trying to push through a big climate bill like one sponsored by Sens. John Kerry, Democrat of Massachusetts, and Joseph Lieberman, independent of Connecticut.

Reid has asked top committee leaders for ideas on how to structure a package of energy initiatives to bring to the Senate floor in July, a clear sign that he does not believe that the Kerry-Lieberman bill has a chance to pass on its own. An aide said Reid would refine his strategy this week after meeting with the entire Senate Democratic caucus. Kerry is to deliver a plea for his broad measure at that session, aides said.

Graham said that until the causes of the BP oil spill were identified and addressed, he would not vote for any sweeping climate change legislation. Instead, he endorsed a bill introduced last week by Sen. Richard G. Lugar, Republican of Indiana, that sets higher fuel economy standards for cars, provides incentives for the development of alternative fuels and imposes stricter efficiency standards on buildings. The Lugar proposal includes no cap on carbon emissions but would seek to reduce greenhouse gas pollution through energy-saving steps.

FUEL

Green Fields: Pork producers want to 'do things right' (*Des Moines Register)*

The National Pork Board, which runs the producer checkoff, celebrated at the World Pork Expo that about 60 percent of all hog production sites have been certified through the organization's Pork Quality Assurance program.

Pork Board chief executive officer Chris Novak acknowledged that in recent years the hog industry has faced questions from supermarkets, restaurants and food chains about animal welfare, health and environmental issues.

The "PQA-Plus" program is an extension of a two-decade-old program under which pork producers could submit to voluntary inspections of their facilities by veterinarians or agricultural educators for certification that they have been doing things correctly for the animals and the environment.

Producers say the inspections not only ward off environmental problems but also give producers some profitable tips.

"I know it helped my operation," said Tim Bierman, a pork producer from Larrabee and president of the National Pork Board, of the inspection on his farm.

The National Pork Board's goal is to get as close to 100 percent of producers to agree to the voluntary inspections. Costs of the inspections, which range from $50 to several hundred dollars, are borne partly by the pork board.

Ethanol giant Archer Daniels Midland Co. says the partial increase in the ethanol-additive limit that the Obama administration is considering will not increase ethanol usage enough to meet federal biofuels mandates.

The EPA is considering a petition from ethanol producers to allow the gasoline sold for conventional cars and trucks to contain up to 15 percent ethanol. That is up from the current cap of 10 percent.

However, EPA officials have said they may restrict the higher ethanol blends to newer model vehicles that it is sure will not be harmed by the extra alcohol in the fuel.

In a letter to the EPA, ADM asked the agency to allow blends of up to 12 percent for all vehicles.

The government's biofuels mandates, which rise annually to 36 billion gallons in 2022, will not be met if the EPA restricts the higher ethanol blends to 2001-model cars and newer, ADM said in the letter.

The Food and Drug Administration, which is under fire for its failure to prevent a series of food-poisoning outbreaks, should turn over its inspection duties to states and local governments, a study says.

The report issued by the National Academy of Sciences says the FDA would have to set standards for how the inspections are conducted and then audit them.

State agencies already do some inspections of food companies under contract with FDA, but critics say the states often do an inadequate job. In Iowa, the state Department of Inspections and Appeals is responsible for food inspections.

"We do not think that creating a new unfunded mandate on state governments is advisable or realistic," the Consumer Federation of America said.

This is a message that Iowa agriculture doesn't want to hear: People should eat less meat. That's the conclusion of a new report from the United Nations Environment Program.

The report says that current dietary patterns aren't environmentally sustainable, given projections in global population growth.

As people increase their incomes, they tend to consume more meat and dairy products. Livestock contribute to greenhouse gas emissions both through the methane they emit and through crop emissions. Runoff can pollute rivers.

The report, by the International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management, says that there are efficiency gains that can reduce the environmental impact of farming, but they'll be offset or overwhelmed by a 50 percent increase in population.

Fight porcine syndrome with filters, experts say

Veterinarians told producers at the World Pork Expo last week that the best way to stop Porcine Reproductive Respiratory Syndrome, or PRRS, is through filters in their confinements and also better sanitation of clothing, chutes and trucks.

"There is no magic bullet, the infection keeps changing," said Paul D. Ruen, a veterinarian from Fairmont, Minn.

PRRS has been in the U.S. for about two decades and has caused off and on damage.

Farm Pilot Project Coordination Inc. will hold its second regional summit Monday through Wednesday at the Embassy Suites in downtown Des Moines.

FPPC is a nonprofit devoted to agricultural conservation and technology research. The conference will focus on challenges of reducing farm runoff load in the Mississippi River as well as creating sustainability.

Speaking will be Gov. Chet Culver, Iowa State University conservationist Richard Sims and David Townsend, assistant vice president for environmental affairs of Smithfield Foods.

For more information, see www.fppcinc.org.

PESTICIDES

US bans widely-used pesticide endosulfan (*Digital Journal*)

Posted Jun 11, 2010 by Stephanie Dearing
The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has decided to ban endosulfan, a widely-used organochlorine pesticide.
Environmental Justice Foundation/Shree Padre
Shruti, a young Indian girl whose village has long been exposed to aerial spraying of endosulfan.
In a press release issued Wednesday, the Environmental Protection Agency said it

"... is taking action to end all uses of the insecticide endosulfan in the United States. Endosulfan, which is used on vegetables, fruits, and cotton, can pose unacceptable neurological and reproductive risks to farmworkers and wildlife and can persist in the environment."

While many applaud the move to stop the use of endosulfan in the United States, the ban was not an easy decision for the EPA. In 2008, a coalition of environmental groups joined by public health and farm worker groups, launched a law suit against the EPA in an effort to have the pesticide banned from use, reported the Pesticide Action Network Pan North America (PANNA). At the time, endosulfan had been banned from European countries as well as a number of other nations.
On Wednesday, PANNA posted a notice celebrating the EPA decision saying

"Today Pesticide Action Network North America (PANNA) and partners around the world are rejoicing over U.S. EPA's announcement of the end of endosulfan, an antiquated, highly toxic insecticide. The pesticide has been linked to autism, birth defects, and delayed puberty in humans.
"This decision is a long overdue victory for the farmworkers who have worked with this poison, the families that live near fields where it's sprayed, and the Indigenous communities in the Arctic who are exposed to it in their traditional foods," said Karl Tupper, Staff Scientist with PANNA. "Our work has finally paid off.""

The main reason for the EPA ban of endosulfan was because

"New data generated in response to the agency's 2002 decision have shown that risks faced by workers are greater than previously known. EPA also finds that there are risks above the agency's level of concern to aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, as well as to birds and mammals that consume aquatic prey which have ingested endosulfan. Farmworkers can be exposed to endosulfan through inhalation and contact with the skin. Endosulfan is used on a very small percentage of the U.S. food supply and does not present a risk to human health from dietary exposure."

The EPA's press release failed to discuss the fact that endosulfan travels through the the environement, endin up in places where it was never used. A report on endosulfan prepared for the United Nations Economic Commission Europe (ECE) noted that Canada has regularly found endosulfan in the arctic since 1993. Canada still allows endosulfan to be used.
There are those who believe saying endosulfan is hazardous to human health is a myth used to deny farmers in developing countries the same advantages afforded farmers in already developed nations. However, such arguments overlook the very real consequences of endosulfan poisoning in countries such as India, where the use of endosulfan in Kerala for 30 years created a human health crisis as reported by The Hindu and a group called Endosulfan Victims.
Now that the United States has banned endosulfan, Australia has said it will review the use of the pesticide, reported the Sydney Morning Herald.
The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organochloride Pollutants is still assessing whether it should list endosulfan.
Endosulfan has been in use since the 1950s,

SUPERFUND

Harbor clean resumes for 7th season in New Bedford (*Associated Press*)

By Associated Press Saturday, June 12, 2010 | http://www.bostonherald.com

NEW BEDFORD — Dredging aimed at removing PCB-contaminated sediment is set to begin in the coming week in New Bedford Harbor.

Since 2004, about 193,000 cubic yards of the tainted sediment has been removed. Another 700,000 cubic yards remains to be dealt with under a 1998 cleanup plan.

Under that plan, the federal Environmental Protection Agency targeted the most severely contaminated soil first.

The soil was contaminated for several decades ending in the 1970s by at least two area electric device manufacturers that used PCBs.

Last year's dredging was paid for, in part, with federal stimulus funds. That allowed five months of dredging, compared to the typical two months under the federal Superfund program.

The EPA hopes to clean up another 50,000 cubic yards this year.
Online:
New Bedford Cleanup: www.epa.gov/ne/nbh

TOXICS

Getting the lead out (*Galesburg Register-Mail*)

Local company accredited by EPA to teach classes on lead paint removal
By JOHN R. PULLIAM
The Register-Mail
Posted Jun 13, 2010 @ 08:15 AM
GALESBURG —

Stephanie Johnson, owner of Johnson Painting, learned in October 2009 that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency planned to implement a new rule that would require painting contractors renovating, repairing or painting houses built before 1978 to be certified in lead inspection and lead assessment. Johnson said the new regulations caught everyone by surprise.

She said Bob Franey of Sherwin-Williams first told her of the proposed regulations, which went into effect April 22.

“I thought ‘how can this possibly be? They’re going to announce it three or four months before it goes into effect?’ ” Johnson said. “This whole thing has snowballed and all of a sudden it was there.”

She worries about the EPA’s ability to handle the program. saying that’s a major reason the new regulations have sneaked up on everyone.

“With the budget crunch, they just couldn’t handle the influx,” she said.

Central Illinois Environmental Safety Resources, a new company Johnson formed, is now fully accredited by the EPA to teach classes for the new Renovator, Repair and Painting Rule. This rule requires certification for anyone receiving compensation (including maintenance and contractors) for performing renovation, repairs and painting in pre-1978 homes, childcare facilities, elementary schools, and some common areas of public and commercial buildings.

Contractors found in violation of this rule can face a fine of up to $32,500 per day.

Training course

“The RRP Training Rule applies to any contractor that will be disturbing more than six square feet of an interior painted surface or 20 square feet of an exterior painted surface in those pre-built 1978 buildings,” Johnson said. “The purpose of the federal rule is to lower the number of lead poisoning cases across the nation, and our class will help renovators work more safely in these older buildings.”

Johnson started a second company to teach certification classes for other contractors and property managers — individuals who own a number of rental units. The company will teach its first class from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday at the Best Western Prairie Inn, 300 S. Soangetaha Road. Another class at Best Western is scheduled for June 25.

Area contractors and renovators interested in completing the RRP training course are encouraged to visit the CIESR website at www.rrpclasses.com or contact Stephanie Johnson at (309) 221-3677.

After she and son Richard Johnson took certification classes in St. Louis, Stephanie sent in the application to certify herself and her new company. Although she submitted the application Jan. 15, she did not receive her certificate until June 4. Her title is training provider/instructional manager. Her son is the principle instructor.

Stephanie Johnson started Johnson Painting in 1986. The company employs herself, her husband, Mike Johnson, and son Ben Johnson. Richard works part-time for the painting firm in the summer.

“We felt this new line would be a good mix with my painting business,” Stephanie Johnson said.

Danger to children

Stephanie said that almost a million children have elevated levels of lead in their blood, according to the EPA. Bad as that is, she said the number was 4.3 million in the 1970s, before lead was removed from gasoline.

She explained that elevated lead levels affect a child’s brain and nervous system, causing IQ and behavorial problems. The lead levels remain high for those children. Johnson said recent studies have linked high lead levels in children with attention-deficit disorder and hyperactivity, with the belief being that lead may account for the 30 percent of children who suffer from ADHD because of unknown causes.

Johnson said the problem is especially prevalent in older cities such as Galesburg, with its historic homes. She said 87 percent of houses built before 1940 contain lead paint, 69 percent for those built between 1940 and 1960 and 24 percent of those built between 1960 and 1978.

“In 1978, they basically outlawed lead paint,” Johnson said. “Realistically, they just eliminated lead.”

Because the new regulations came about with so little warning, CIESR is one of only six Illinois-based companies certified to teach the classes, Johnson said.

She said the company website was something new for her and Richard.

“We designed that website ourselves,” she said. “There are a lot of firsts with this company.”

She thanked First Bank for its help in forming the new company.

Johnson said that, in this economy, “starting a new company can be a little daunting, especially when you have a company doing something nobody knows anything about.”

She said the initial classes are almost full.

“We will be starting more classes, probably by the end of the week,” Johnson said.

Classes in the suburbs

Setting up the new business has not only included becoming certified — to teach classes here and in other parts of the state — and setting up the website, Johnson said they even had to get the classroom site approved.

“We went around here in town and we decided Best Western met our needs,” she said. “We can very successfully handle 20 people in that room.”

Johnson said some companies will teach many more students at a time, but she wanted classes to remain small. CIESR will tentatively have its first class outside the area June 28. According to the company’s website, that session will be at the Holiday Inn Express in Joliet. Because the company is approved for a 20-by-24 foot classroom and 20-by-24 foot area for hands-on training, Johnson had to find a room of that size in Joliet.

She said that although Galesburg is a small community, she figures contractors and property managers from Peoria and the Quad Cities may come here for classes. Richard is in Minooka, near Joliet, which will be the firm’s other area of concentration.

“With his area, we have a lot of exposure,” she said.

Johnson said they will be able to offer the certification classes — six hours classroom, two hours hands-on — in the suburbs. She said at least three of the current training providers are located within the city of Chicago.

“Our main thing for the first couple of classes is to get everybody in Galesburg trained,” she said. “That’s always been my main focus. We will branch out after that.”

The EPA regulations are lengthy and contained in Title 40, subchapter R: Toxic Control Act, parts 700-799. There are regulations for sellers of homes and those who rent them, as well as contractors. For instance, a seller or lessor “shall provide the purchaser or lessee with an EPA-approved lead hazard information pamphlet.”

Contractors have reporting and record-keeping requirements, as well as health and safety date reporting mandates.

Johnson would like to see young homeowners, likely to have children, who are doing their own work become informed about the dangers of lead paint dust.

“That part of the population needs to be informed,” she said.

Johnson said the Western Illinois Builders Association has done a great job in making sure its members are aware of the new regulations.

If someone is paid to do the work, she must be certified.

“But if you’re doing it in your own home, you don’t have to be certified,” Johnson said.

jpulliam@register-mail.com

Tests show mustard gas-tainted clam boat clean (*Associated Press*)

(AP)
NEW BEDFORD, Mass. — A clam boat that was isolated off Massachusetts after pulling up mustard-gas tainted munitions shells has steamed to shore after preliminary tests showed it was decontaminated.

Coast Guard Petty Officer Lauren Jorgensen said the vessel ESS Pursuit was docking in New Bedford on Saturday.

Jorgensen says additional samples from the Atlantic City, N.J.-based vessel must be cleared by Environmental Protection Agency labs before the boat can head home. Jorgensen says that's likely to take a few days.

The boat had been isolated off New Bedford since Monday, a day after it pulled up eight shells off Long Island, including one that leaked mustard gas.

One crewman was hospitalized with severe blisters from the chemical. He was released Friday.

EPA rule targets lead paint stirred up by renovations (NOLA)

Story also appeared: *Times Picayune*

Published: Saturday, June 12, 2010, 5:30 PM Updated: Thursday, June 10, 2010, 7:29 PM
Molly Reid, The Times-Picayune Molly Reid, The Times-Picayune

Many New Orleans homeowners are aware that injestion of lead-based paint, which often is found in historic houses, can pose serious health risks to children and fetuses. But that isn't the only way it can be harmful.

Lead poisoning also can arise from inhalation of lead-based paint dust during renovation work, and the Environmental Protection Agency recently announced more stringent regulation to protect children from this risk.

According to the new EPA rule, which went into effect April 22, "firms performing renovation, repair and painting projects that disturb lead-based paint in homes, child-

care facilities and schools built before 1978 must be certified ... to prevent lead contamination."

Exposure to even small amounts of lead can result in learning disabilities, behavioral problems and speech delays in children. A recent study showed that young children living in homes during renovations were 30 percent more likely to have unsafe levels of lead in their bloodstreams than children in houses not undergoing renovation, the EPA says.

The new EPA rule applies to renovation or repainting jobs that disturb either 6 square feet of an interior painted wall or 20 square feet of an exterior painted wall. "Disturbing" procedures include "sanding; grinding; demolition of interior walls; small surface disruptions such as drilling and sawing; removing paint using heat guns, open flame torches, chemical paint removers; dry scraping; (and) using a power planer, " according to the EPA.

Though many historic homes have new coats of paint, the EPA rule exists because renovation work can create dust from old, pre-1978 paint jobs, which are likely to contain lead, said Jon Luther, executive vice president of the Home Builders Association of Greater New Orleans.

Builders and renovators certified under the new rule will know how to properly contain areas undergoing renovation to prevent the dust from spreading and being inhaled, said HBA Communications Director Lauren Booksh.

"What they are required to do is containment, basically, " she said.

If contracting firms and renovators do not follow the revised EPA guidelines, which mandate an eight-hour training course in lead contamination prevention and specific on-site practices, they will face tens of thousands of dollars in fines, said Luther.

The local HBA has, since February, provided nine training courses to bring about 130 local contractors, nonprofits and other building professionals up to EPA Lead-Safe certification, Luther said.

"The scramble is on to get enough people certified under the rule, " Luther said. "Everybody's just playing catch-up, if you will. We've been getting calls from all kinds of people in the region."

Not all those calls have been friendly, Luther said.

"It does add costs, " he said. "Builders are telling me, 'I'm going to have to spend money, take time off the job, to get this certification, and meanwhile some other guy is going to underbid me, and I'll lose a job. I'm going to get penalized for being in compliance.'"

Ignoring the rule, however, not only can put clients and their children at risk, but also, if builders are investigated by the EPA or a local enforcement agency, can cost them a fine of $37,500 per day of noncompliance, Luther said.

"I say, 'Guys, as a lawyer, I don't encourage you to ignore (the new rule), '" he said. "You ignore it at your own peril. If you don't have it in your paperwork that you're a (Lead-Safe) certified renovator now, you're going to have to start really backtracking to them."

Owners of historic homes are encouraged to ask specifically for a Lead-Safe contractor before starting any renovation work, Luther said.

Molly Reid can be reached at mreid@timespicayune.com or 504.826.3448.

SEMINARS OFFERED

The LSU AgCenter--LaHouse Resource Center in Baton Rouge is sponsoring Lead Certified Renovator Training classes and certification tests throughout the state for professional contractors, maintenance workers, painters and others who are paid to perform renovation, repair and remodeling projects in pre-1978 housing and child-occupied buildings.

All firms that perform renovation, repair or painting work are required to be EPA certified, and also must have at least one "certified renovator" on the job site where lead-based paint is disturbed.

For more information about the classes, go to www.lsuagcenter.com/lahouse, and then to Seminars and Events.

WATER

EPA favors excavation, transport of Barrel Fill waste (*Springfield News Sun*)

By Bridgette Outten, Staff Writer
Updated 1:35 AM Sunday, June 13, 2010
TREMONT CITY — The public will have input on which plan is best to clean up the Tremont City Barrel Fill.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency already has an idea it favors, according to information recently provided by the agency.

To address some 300,000 gallons of industrial waste buried in the barrel fill, the EPA wants to implement a $56.9 million plan that would excavate waste and transport off-site for treatment and disposal and establish an on-site solid waste cell for nonhazardous solid waste.

The final plan, which will be decided on by the agency in the coming months, will not affect the adjacent Tremont City Landfill because the two sites are considered separate issues.

The public has until July 12 to agree to the plan, suggest alternatives or otherwise make comments.

Jeff Briner, chairman of the local grass-roots group Citizens for Wise Action Toward Environmental Resources (CF/WATER) said the EPA is one step closer to cleaning up the site.

“It’s actually a very big thing,” Briner said, noting the EPA had been working with the group on the barrel fill alone for almost eight years.

Dr. Martin Cook, a 93-year-old member of CF/WATER, gives founder Laura Kaffenbarger full credit for starting the battle to rid the barrel fill and the landfill of its potentially toxic waste.

Over the years, the group has spent more than $850,000 from fundraising efforts and donations, Cook said.

Officials say there’s no immediate danger from the barrel fill, but the EPA’s study found “elevated risk to human health from future ground water contaminants leaking into the surface water.”

Norman Carl, a chemist who worked for Montgomery County Environmental Laboratory before a stroke 15 years ago, has always been concerned about Chapman Creek, which flows near the landfill and barrel fill sites.

Carl, 60, became involved with studying the toxins at the sites on his own and is a vocal supporter of cleaning up the sites.

He said he suggested to county officials 25 years ago that the sites should be designated as hazardous.

“I feel vindicated,” he said. “Here we are after 25 years.”

Barrel Fill history

In the late 1990s, the EPA identified 75 companies that used the barrel fill between 1976 and 1979, but by then many of the companies were defunct.

Ultimately, 21 companies — with eight of them involved on a day-to-day basis — signed an agreement with the EPA in 2002 to complete and financially support an investigation and feasibility study.

The eight companies that make up the Responsible Environmental Solutions Alliance (RESA) are Delphi Automotive Systems, Franklin International, Motors Liquidation Co. (the successor to General Motors Corp.) International Paper Co., Procter & Gamble, PPG Industries, Strebor Inc. and Worthington Cylinder Corp., said Beth Mehlberth, RESA community outreach coordinator.

To date, RESA has spent about $8 million on investigation and study of the landfill, she said.

The plans were developed by RESA's consulting firm Haley & Aldrich, Inc. Cost of implementation of the courses of action range from $7 million to $60 million.

Mehlberth and Dave Hagen, senior vice president of Haley and Aldrich, said in previous interviews that the companies, not taxpayers, that would fund the plans.

Article published at MonroeNews.com on Jun 12, 2010

EPA unveils timetable to clean up River Raisin (*Monroe Evening News*)

Some of the most potent pockets of poisons remaining in the River Raisin will be cleaned out this fall as part of a larger plan to scour toxins in the riverbed downstream of the Winchester St. bridge.That's the tentative timetable federal Environmental Protection Agency officials outlined Thursday during a meeting of the city's Committee on the Environment and Water Quality.Scott Cieniawski, an EPA project engineer, said the most recent sampling of the river still showed some areas with concentrations of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) of more than 50 parts per million — a level considered hazardous — despite a series of clean-up efforts dating back to 1997.PCBs, a now-banned compound once widely used as an insulator and fire retardant, is known to cause cancer. Concerns are that it accumulates in the fatty tissue of fish, which then are eaten by people. The chemical is believed to have gotten into the river through a history of discharges from industry."Upstream of the turning basin, things are looking pretty good," Mr. Cieniawski said. "Pretty much from the turning basin downstream is where we saw the problems."The current clean-up effort will consist of three distinct parts — dredging and dewatering of sediment showing the highest concentrations and disposal in a hazardous waste landfill; dredging of sediment with lesser concentrations not considered toxic and disposal in an Army Corps of Engineers' dredge disposal area at Sterling State Park; and dredging below the navigation channel near the center of the river in conjunction with routine federal dredging to maintain channel depths.A mechanical dredge would remove an estimated 4,000 cubic yards of the most-tainted

sediment, possibly starting in mid-October. It would be dewatered and blended with a stabilizing agent before being trucked to a landfill. It would take about 400 truck trips to get the sediment out of town.“We anticipate it’s going to be two to three weeks of actual dredging with a couple of weeks of mobilization on the front side,” Mr. Cianiawski said. The work is expected to be completed in early December.A tentative public hearing and explanation of the process is planned for mid-July.Dredging of sediment with lesser concentrations of PCBs could begin in June, 2011, and be completed by September of that year.That dredging would have to be mid-June or after so as not to disturb amorous eagles. “Historically, there have been nesting bald eagles on the river where we would be doing our work,” Mr. Cieniawski said.About 95,000 cubic yards would be piped to the disposal area at the state park. Another 30,000 cubic yards under the navigation channel would be removed through dredging completed in November.Rough cost estimates are the work might cost $15 million, paid with a combination of federal Great Lakes Legacy Act money and Clean Michigan Initiative dollars.When all the work is done, it is hoped that part of the river would be the first taken off the federal list of 14 “areas of concern” in Michigan where pollution poses the greatest environmental risks.“Some of us have been waiting for a long time on this,” said Daniel Stefanski, a COTE member and Monroe County Drain Commissioner. “We definitely want to be one of the success stories for delisting.”

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