

DEC Mulls Permits For River Dumping

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News Environmental Reporter

State attorneys in Buffalo and Albany are expected to rule shortly on two cases involving permits to dump wastes into the Niagara River.

One involves Bechtel National Inc., a company working at the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site that dumped 700,000 gallons of water despite warnings from the state Department of Environmental Conservation not to do so.

The second involves petitions by both environmentalists and industrialists to conduct hearings on the proposed waste discharge permit for the Niagara Falls sewage treatment plant.

Regional Director John J. Spagnoli of the DEC's Buffalo office, said legal review of the Bechtel action should be completed this week.

MEANWHILE, Bechtel officials said today the 700,000 gallons were released from holding basins on the Lewiston site "to prevent the possibility that the rain-filled basins would overflow onto the site and wash contamination into Lake Ontario."

Bechtel, which manages the site for the U.S. Department of Energy and earlier called for additional storage of radioactive wastes at the site, said the water in the basins "had been previously tested and found to be of adequate quality and

within understood state and federal water discharge standards."

Bechtel said test data was supplied to the DEC in advance of the Nov. 11 discharge. Project Manager Robert L. Rudolph said because of procedural delays in the state's issuance of a discharge permit, construction water and heavier than usual rainfall had filled the storage basins to capacity.

"We were faced with the decision whether to allow the basins to overflow from further rains, with the distinct possibility that the overflow would pick up contamination on the site, or make a controlled release of water we knew was in conformance with state water standards," Mr. Randolph said.

State officials said the test data was supplied after Bechtel released the water, a move that Mr. Spagnoli said "disregarded state environmental standards."

DEC ATTORNEYS in Albany are reviewing requests for a hearing on the Niagara Falls plant in petitions that seek the same type of hearing but for contrasting viewpoints.

Twenty-five companies allied under the Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce's Industrial Liaison Committee protested to the DEC that the proposed discharge permit is too tough and will require "wasteful" expenditures by industry.