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County leaders renew push for burning PCB sediments

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APPLETON -- Dissatisfaction with a disposal plan for PCB-contaminated sediments being dredged from Little Lake Butte des Morts is water under the bridge, the state's dredging project manager said Wednesday.

Bruce Baker, deputy administrator for Department of Natural Resources Water Division, said officials from Outagamie, Winnebago and Calumet counties are relying on false information when they call for Fox River sediments to be superheated and turned into aggregate rather than being put into a landfill.

At a news conference today, the leaders of the three counties were to voice their opposition to landfill disposal and call for the burning, or **vitrification**, of the sediment.

Outagamie County Executive Toby Paltzer said new data from Minergy Corp., a Neenah-based affiliate of Wisconsin Energy Corp., seeking a contract to vitrify the sediments, suggests the DNR overstated the option's costs.

Baker said his office has received no data to refute earlier findings suggesting **vitrification** would increase the disposal costs by 50 percent for the owners of present and former papermaking companies who are paying for the cleanup of the Fox River.

PCBs, manmade chemical compounds formerly used to manufacture carbonless paper, are believed to be responsible for birth defects in animals and increased cancer rates in humans. Seven paper companies discharged PCBs into the Fox River before their use was banned in the 1970s.

With the \$400 million river cleanup already under way, Baker said it's too late to consider a new disposal option.

"It doesn't really matter what opinion we have at this point because we already have a judicially accepted agreement for (the companies) to do the cleanup, and they have the option to pursue any disposal method that meets the law," he said.

In addition to saying **vitrification** would be cheaper, Paltzer said PCB contamination was found in leachate from a Winnebago County landfill cell storing contaminated sediment.

"We're saying, 'Look, you put it in the Winnebago County landfill and it started to leach out, so let's stop putting it into any landfill,'" Paltzer said. "Let's just do the right thing and have Minergy handle it."

However, Winnebago County Solid Waste Management Director Len Leverence said Wednesday low levels of PCBs were present in the landfill before 1999, so he cannot trace the low-level water contamination to the sediment.

In addition to carbonless paper, PCBs also were used in sealing and caulking compounds, and in coolants and lubricants used for certain kinds of electrical equipment.

Baker said the seven companies deemed responsible for the river cleanup costs would be forced to bear the additional costs of pursuing **vitrification**, which the DNR has estimated could add \$200 million to the bill.

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