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Dump sites near Hartford picked

3 parcels in running as storage areas for low-level radioactive waste

By ROBERT MILLER
Republican-American

FARMINGTON — Amidst the catcalls and cries of antinuclear activists, the state named three sites clustered east of the Connecticut River as finalists in its search for a low-level radioactive waste storage site.

One 470-acre site straddles the East Windsor-South Windsor border, while the two others — 230 acres and 243 acres — are in Ellington.

All are part of an old glacial lake formation, marked by a flat terrain and clay soil.

During a press conference at the Hartford Marriott, officials from the Connecticut Hazardous Waste Management Service called the naming of the sites a major step toward getting a storage site built in the state by mid-1995.

If people discuss the project calmly and rationally, they'll be convinced of the need for the facility, its safety, and the financial benefits it can bring, the officials said.

But antinuclear activists at the meeting — waving banners and signs, and often shouting down service spokesman Joseph Cohen — put on a demonstration that belied hopes of quiet discussion.

Likewise, officials from the "winning" towns Monday expressed anything but a sense of ease or triumph after getting the news.

"When they told me, I went numb," said Ellington First Selectman Donald Landmann. "I had no idea they'd even look at a town like this. The land they're looking at is just beautiful farmland."

"It was a total shock to us," said East Windsor First Selectman Walter Gudmanas. "We met with those people a year ago, and I got the impression that the site would be in either northeastern or northwestern Connecticut.

Environmental activists from the Northwest Corner also took little solace from dodging this radioactive bullet. The overall danger of the waste is the essential problem, they said.

"This isn't a NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) issue," said Charlotte LaVoie, Winsted's community lawyer and an outspoken critic of the nuclear power industry. "The great question is the continued generation of radioactive waste nationwide."

The site will be used to store the low-level radioactive waste the state produces for the next 50 years; it will have to store the most radioactive wastes for 500 years.

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