

Ellington, Windsor sites picked for waste dumps

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management service at a news conference in Farmington.

Locally, amid relief that none of the locations is in the Northwest Corner, area environmentalists vowed to fight construction of the radioactive waste dump.

In fact, a number of area residents concerned about the potential plant traveled to Hartford last night to attend a SANE-Freeze meeting with other environmentalists across the state.

"It's still people, it's still the earth, it's still the environment" that will be affected, Roberta Georgis, a Torrington resident, said. "I'd be horrified if it was in my back yard. And I am horrified for the people who will have it in their back yard."

Georgis and her husband, David Georgis, are coordinators of Earthshare, an area group she said "tries to empower people to have a positive impact on the environment."

She praised New York and Texas residents, whose protests have stalled those states' plans to build similar facilities. The protests, she said, should be copied throughout the country so the federal government will take a

second look at how low-level radioactive waste is treated.

In the early 1980s, Congress passed a series of laws that made each state responsible for disposing of its own waste by 1990. Connecticut currently ships its waste to facilities in Nevada, South Carolina or Washington.

Even though the dump will not be built in the Northwest Corner, residents here will still bear a burden of the project's costs, Charlene LaVoie, Winsted's community lawyer, said.

Building the facility will cost \$50 million to \$70 million, to be financed by the state's waste generators. But the generators will pass their costs to the ratepayers by increasing utility and power plant rates.

"This waste issue is going to cost us whether we live there (at the site) or not," LaVoie said.

About 40,000 to 50,000 cubic feet of low-level waste is generated annually in Connecticut. LaVoie said state officials should be researching how to limit the amount of waste that is generated rather than planning construction of a multimillion-dollar waste dump that no one wants.

"The whole process is flawed," LaVoie said of the Connecticut

Waste Management Service's work. "Because the basic premise is not being examined. We have to start looking for alternatives now and spend money on other things."

Only 13 percent of the nation's energy needs are met by nuclear energy, she said.

Georgis said any radioactive waste dump should be situated as close as possible to the waste generators. The lion's share of the waste in Connecticut comes from Northeast Utilities' four nuclear power plants — Connecticut Yankee in Haddam Neck and Millstone plants 1, 2 & 3 in Waterford.

The waste includes radioactive machinery, parts, equipment, clothing and tools.

The service used a private consultant, the Battelle Memorial Institute, which combed the state to identify hundreds of possible sites. Don Ballmann, a geologist for the firm, said the three sites are all characterized by a thick layer of glacial till, or clay-like soil, above bedrock.

Joseph M. Cohen, spokesman for the waste management service, said site selection followed a geographically unbiased approach so that the board of directors,

which chose the three sites, did not know the locations when the land parcels were chosen.

In acknowledging the criticism of the site locations as well as the eventual construction of the radioactive waste disposal, Cohen stressed a number of health and safety precautions in the facility's design.

"We think we have all the safeguards in place," he said. "We like to see this as part of an environmental solution. It is unusual that a state is taking responsibility for its waste."

Cornwall First Selectman Richard B. Dakin said he, like many other area town officials, was relieved when the three locations were named and Cornwall was not among them.

He said the town's rocky geology and poor drainage contrasted with the geological and hydrological characteristics the waste management service was looking for.

And if Cornwall had been chosen?

"We would certainly have put up one hell of a fight," Dakin said.

Associated Press reports were used in this article.