Sharon Selected as Contingent

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the site map and also could not identify affected property owners.

According to the Nature Conservancy, an environmentally sensitive fen, or swamp, extends into the potential dumpsite area. The Conservancy owns 39 acres of the 125-acre Benton Hill fen, which is just south but not directly contiguous to the targeted site, said David Sutherland, director of governmental relations for the conservation group's Connecticut Chapter. He said that several people who own property within the fen, including land in the possible dump area, have agreed to keep the Conservancy notified of any proposed changes to their property.

"Our major concern is how the hydrology of the area would be affected," he said. "We're also trying to coordinate our investigations with scientists in the area." Mr. Sutherland said that he would try to attend tonight's meeting.

"I am appalled by the choice, not just because it's in town," but because of the proximity of wetlands, aquifers and drainage systems to the site, said Inland Wetlands Commission chairman Edward Kirby. "I can't believe somebody chose to put any sort of activity in there."

"If someone came to us for a construction project for that area, it wouldn't be something we would even consider," he noted.

Mr. Kirby said the Benton Hill fen is "the only place like that in the state of Connecticut.

"It is a swamp type of area, designated wetlands in the town. It's very special," he said. "Bog turtles are there, which is a very rare species in Connecticut."

Mr. Kirby also pointed out that the marble bedrock of the possible dumpsite area is "one of the most permeable" types of bedrock.

Ms. Baxter, however, said that thick clay soil on the land, similar to the soil in the Ellington area, made the Sharon land attractive for siting the dump, as well as its isolation from a populous area and the ease with which water movement can be predicted in the area.

"In terms of water quality, it was far enough away from public wells and from state-documented water sources" to get a high ranking as a potential site for the facility, Ms. Baxter said. "We prefer minimal impact to water sources, and it was top rank in that."

But Mr. Moeller said that the selection "doesn't make any sense as far as I can see — not in terms of soil, geology or the wetlands system around it. I think their data is wrong, and at this point, we're beginning the process to try and show them that," he said.

The potential dumpsite is also one mile south of the Buckley family estate, according to the Sharon Country Club, and Ms. Baxter said that Amenia Union Road runs through the southern portion of the site.

William F. Buckley Jr. could not be reached for comment.

Richard Howes, a board member of the 96-year-old Sharon Country Club, said that the panel has not taken a position on the proposal yet. He said that detailed information about the site has to be examined.

According to Ms. Baxter, the Sharon property was ranked fourth in the state for the dubious honor purely using objective information and the ultimate choice was made through a "blind" selection, whereby the service's board members were given site characteristics to consider, without specific named locations.

"The data that we used is data available through public agencies" such as the state Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Housing and the Office of Policy and Management, she said. "Until we are able to do on-site testing, we would not be able to know exactly what is there.

"We don't know that the data we are using is absolutely accurate," she acknowledged. "We recognize that. And just because there are some wetlands on the site does not automatically eliminate it from consideration. The disposal facility will only occupy one-third of any site we choose. It really just depends what is there."

The two-year selection process, which whittled down more than 500 sites in Connecticut to eight candidates sites—of which Sharon is one—and the three final choices, was all done without anyone setting foot on the potential

"Geological issues are key to safe management of any solid or liquid waste, but the state must consider transportation and safety issues in deciding where to put this type of disposal facility. I am not convinced that the state would have chosen a town like Sharon if it had considered these issues."

Sixth District
U.S. Representative
Nancy L. Johnson