

# THE REGION

## Rubicon wants to incinerate pond wastes

By Vicki Ferstel/  
River Parishes Bureau

**DONALDSONVILLE** — A Geismar chemical company wants to spend up to a year incinerating hazardous wastes from two inactive effluent ponds, company officials told the Ascension Parish Police Jury Thursday.

Rubicon Inc. is asking for approval from the state Department of Environmental Quality to incinerate on-site contaminated land and sludge from the two inactive effluent ponds.

P.H. Lane, manager of safety health and environmental affairs for Rubicon, said DEQ will hold a public hearing on the disposal plans Nov. 1 at 6 p.m. at the Gonzales Civic Center.

Lane said the company built three \$1 million storage tanks to handle the rainwater and other effluents, replacing the two effluent ponds built in 1971 and 1974.

Jim Porter, vice president of GDC Engineering Inc. of Baton Rouge, said the only cost-effective way to get rid of the 32,000 tons of waste is by bringing in a transportable radiant-type incinerator.

Porter said it is four times cheaper to incinerate the wastes on-site than it is to transport the soil and sludge to a commercial hazardous waste site.

The general contractors will incinerate 80 tons of wastes a day for more than a year. "We'll do everything we can to prevent odors," Porter said.

He said they have to stabilize, blend, pulverize and stack the wastes before loading them onto a conveyor belt into the incinerator.

Porter said they'll decide what type of disposal to use for the ash once they determine whether it is non-hazardous.

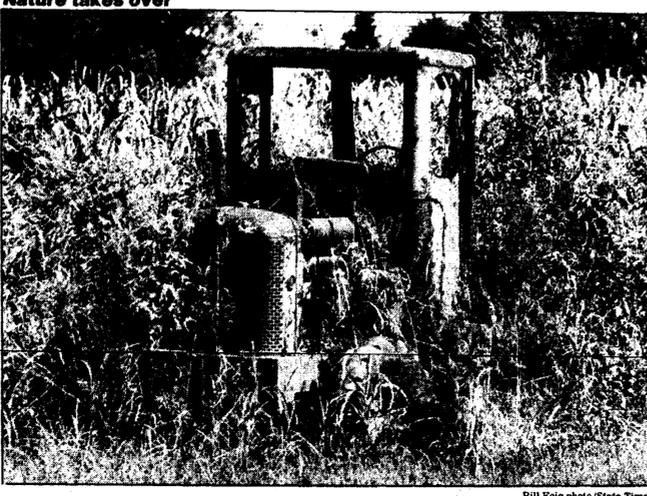
The trickiest part of the operation, Porter said, will be handling the contaminated groundwater. He admitted the contamination goes as deep as 35 to 40 feet.

Porter said they'll send the water through the plant system for deep-well injection.

After the pits are cleaned out, Porter said, they will be capped with clay.

The pits are filled with hazardous organic chemicals such as toluene, nitrobenzene, aniline and monochlorobenzene.

## Nature takes over



A road grader that has seen better days is being overtaken by weeds along La. 686 in St. Martin Parish. The rusting piece of Americana is losing its battle to clear land.

Bill Feig photo/State-Times

## Agency considering action against GSU following inspection

By James Minton/  
Baker-Zachary Bureau

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is studying possible enforcement action against Gulf States Utilities Co. as a result of a recent inspection at the River Bend nuclear power plant near St. Francisville.

NRC officials and GSU representatives conferred by telephone Thursday to discuss three possible violations of NRC regulations cited by the federal agency.

The enforcement conference initiated by NRC regional headquarters in Arlington, Texas, followed a special inspection of River Bend's fuel building ventilation filtering system between Aug. 29 and Sept. 15.

GSU notified the government's resident inspectors on Aug. 29 that switches for heaters in the two sections of the emergency ventilation system filters had been left in an inoperable position.

The heaters are designed to increase the efficiency of activated charcoal filters in the ventilation system by lowering the relative humidity of the filtered air.

The charcoal filters are designed to remove 99 percent of any radioactive iodine particles which may move through the ventilation system in an emergency, provided the filtered air is maintained at 70 percent or less relative humidity, according to an NRC document.

Iodine compounds are retained by the human thyroid gland.

During normal operation, exhaust air from the fuel building is released directly through the atmosphere, but when high airborne radioactivity concentrations are detected in the building, the exhaust air is routed through the charcoal filtration units.

The potential violations noted in the NRC inspection summary are:

- Failure to maintain the fuel building ventilation charcoal filtration system operable.
- Failure to conduct adequate shift turnovers — the transfer of control from one shift of operators to their relief.
- Failure to timely implement

corrective action initiated due to a previous incident.

NRC spokesman Joe Gilliland said a decision on whether GSU violated the federal regulations is not likely for at least three weeks.

The inspection summary said it is not clear how long the heaters were off, but when the ventilation systems were activated twice as a result of a reactor shutdown on Aug. 25, "system line ups were performed that should have ensured that the switches were in the proper position."

"Six shift turnover control board checks and two line up checks prior to mode changes should also have identified the inoperable condition of the heaters," the summary said.

"The NRC staff is particularly concerned with this event because it appears that the corrective actions from a similar event two years ago were not completed. Had these earlier corrective actions been completed, this event could have been avoided," L.J. Callahan, regional director of NRC's Division of Reactor Projects, said in a letter to GSU officials.

"In addition, your licensed operators should have identified that the heater switches were misaligned during control board walk downs," the letter stated.

Bill Benedetto, GSU public affairs officer, said the filtration system would only be used in the event of an accident in the fuel building, such as in moving the fuel, "but the system would work anyway" despite the inoperable heaters.

Benedetto said the filters lose their efficiency when the relative humidity is above 70 percent, because they would also absorb moisture, "but the humidity never goes above 70 percent in that building anyway."

"We weren't moving fuel or anything," the GSU spokesman said, "and our analysis showed that the (heater) breakers being open had no safety significance."

Benedetto added that GSU has installed additional indicator lights "to make it easier for operators to know the breakers are open."

## Police jury offers settlement in firing

By James Minton/  
Baker-Zachary Bureau

**ST. FRANCISVILLE** — The West Feliciana Parish Police Jury will attempt to negotiate a settlement with a former employee who filed a discrimination suit after he was fired in 1984.

After an hour-long executive session, jurors voted 4-1 Thursday to offer an out-of-court settlement to Otis Louis Wilson, who was fired in May 1984 against the advice of then-District Attorney Leon Picou.

A trial in the matter is scheduled to begin Tuesday in federal court in Baton Rouge.

The terms of the proposed settlement were not discussed in the jury's open session. Wilson's petition asks for \$100,000 in damages, reinstatement with full pay and retroactive salary payments.

Wilson was hired as a water-meter reader in January 1984 with the

stipulation that he obtain automobile insurance equal to that of other parish employees and that he would have to be bonded by the jury's bonding company.

The bonding company advised the jury three months later that it could not bond Wilson "based on the application submitted."

Wilson filed suit in December 1984, alleging he was fired because he is black. Named as defendants are former jurors Clifford Wilcox, Andrew Cummings and H.L. Stutzman, as well as current jurors Billy Shoemaker and John Roach, and former jury secretary-treasurer June K. Perkins.

Picou, in advising against Wilson's firing, told the jurors he would not defend them in court. The jurors later hired a New Orleans law firm to represent them.

Shoemaker voted against the settlement at the conclusion of Thursday's executive session.

In other business, the jurors discussed

two alternate proposals offered by Parish Engineer Dale Hodges to open Cat Island Road to normal traffic but reached no final decision. A large section of the road, which partially parallels the Mississippi River, washed into Polly Creek after heavy rains fell in the area on Sept. 16.

Hodges said a large section of the road and 20 to 30 feet of shoulder "sloughed off" into the creek, which he estimated is some 30 feet below the level of the road. "There are some trees in the slide that are still standing upright," the engineer commented.

Ronnie Ard of Georgia-Pacific Corp. and local farmer Truitt Jordan urged the jury to take action to reopen the road to normal traffic. Ard said Georgia-Pacific had donated 23 cubic yards of limestone to allow vehicles to travel on the opposite shoulder of the road, but said the rest of road is likely to slide into the creek with another heavy rain.

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