Refinery Wants to Change Wetlands Protection

WESTLAKE, La. (AP) — A Westlake refinery is holding a public meeting this week about its proposal to sink a sheet metal barrier into the ground to keep chemicals out of Bayou Verdine.

The Axiall Corp. refinery has been using wells to pump chlorinated hydrocarbons away from the bayou. It has asked the state for permission to change that to a permanent groundwater barrier along its north dock next to the bayou.

The wells are nearly 25 years old and failing, Bill Goulet, Eagle's remediation specialist, told the American Press [1]. A barrier wall is a more modern and reliable system, he said.

"A barrier wall does not rely on electricity or any other utility," Goulet said. "So during a hurricane, a wall will still function during power outages. Wells can and will go down."

Axiall was formed in January when PPG Industries' commodity chemicals division and Georgia Gulf merged. Eagle is the Axiall subsidiary that holds hazardous waste permits originally issued to PPG. Eagle is also responsible for Axiall's hazardous waste cleanup and remediation.

Wednesday's meeting will explain the proposed change and take public comment about it. Comments can be sent until Aug. 26.

Goulet said Eagle is still evaluating what kind of a barrier will be installed, adding that it would most likely be made of solid steel. He said the barrier's cost is estimated to be $2 million.

If the state Department of Environmental Quality approves Eagle's permit modification, Goulet said, construction on the new barrier will begin in fall or winter.

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Information from: American Press, http://www.americanpress.com [2]

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