

# COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN FOR REMEDIAL INVESTIGATION

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**EPA Contract No. 68-W6-0042  
EPA Work Assignment No. 150-RARA-01N9**

**EPA Project Officer: Diana King  
EPA Remedial Project Manager: Leslie McVickar**

***Prepared for:***

Pownal Tannery Superfund Site  
Pownal, Vermont

***Prepared By:***

Metcalf & Eddy, Inc.  
701 Edgewater Drive  
Wakefield, MA 01880

***Team Subcontractor***

TRC Environmental Corporation  
Boott Mills South  
100 Foot of John Street  
Lowell, MA 01852  
(978) 970-5600

**March 2004**

**POWNAI TANNERY SUPERFUND SITE  
NORTH POWNAI, VERMONT  
COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently conducting a remedial action at the Pownal Tannery Superfund hazardous waste site in North Pownal, Vermont (the "Site"). This Community Relations Plan identifies issues of community concern and outlines planned EPA activities to address the site-related informational needs of the North Pownal area. The goal of the community relations plan for this area is: 1) to help the public understand the activities being undertaken at the Site and why such measures are to be undertaken; and 2) to assist the public in their understanding of Site conditions in order to exercise a voice in EPA decisions regarding how to address the risks posed by the Site.

This document is designed for use by both the public and agency personnel working on the Site. The EPA is conducting the cleanup of the Site. It is intended that the agencies involved in this remedial action use this report to better understand and respond to community issues, needs, and concerns. Citizens are encouraged to use this report to learn whether their particular concerns have been noted by the EPA and how to become informed and involved during the remedial action to address contamination at the Site.

The information in this plan is based primarily on discussions conducted in North Pownal with area residents and town officials on September 11, 2003, as well as observations made through less formal interviews and conversations with local residents and town officials in the fall of 2003. In general, the community is aware of the Site and EPA's activities. Many local residents have lived in Pownal for many years and are knowledgeable about tannery operations and some of the tannery disposal practices. Many local residents have previously relayed stories of working in the tannery, and of other information about how the tannery operated, including how waste was handled and disposed.

Citizens or others with concerns not noted in this report are encouraged to contact the EPA at the address and telephone numbers listed in Appendix A of this document.

This report is organized as follows:

- Site Description
- Community Profile
- Community Involvement and Concerns
- Objectives of this Community Relations Program
- Planned Community Relations Activities
- Timing of Community Relations Activities
- Appendix A: List of Contacts and Interested Parties
- Appendix B: Information Repository and Suggested Meeting Location
- Appendix C: Newspaper Articles Pertaining to the Site

## **Site Description**

Figure 1 shows the location of the Pownal Tannery Site, located on State Route 346 in the Town of North Pownal, Bennington County, Vermont. The Site consists of two properties. The southern property contains the former tannery buildings and the nearby sludge lagoons, and occupies approximately 30 acres. This property has frontage on State Route 346 to the south, and is bordered by the Hoosic River to the west, railroad tracks and a residential area to the east, and cornfields to the north. The property includes five lagoons, several former tannery buildings, and a warehouse. A landfill was constructed on the second property, located one-half mile south of the tannery process building and was used by the tannery to receive sludge from the tannery and lagoons.

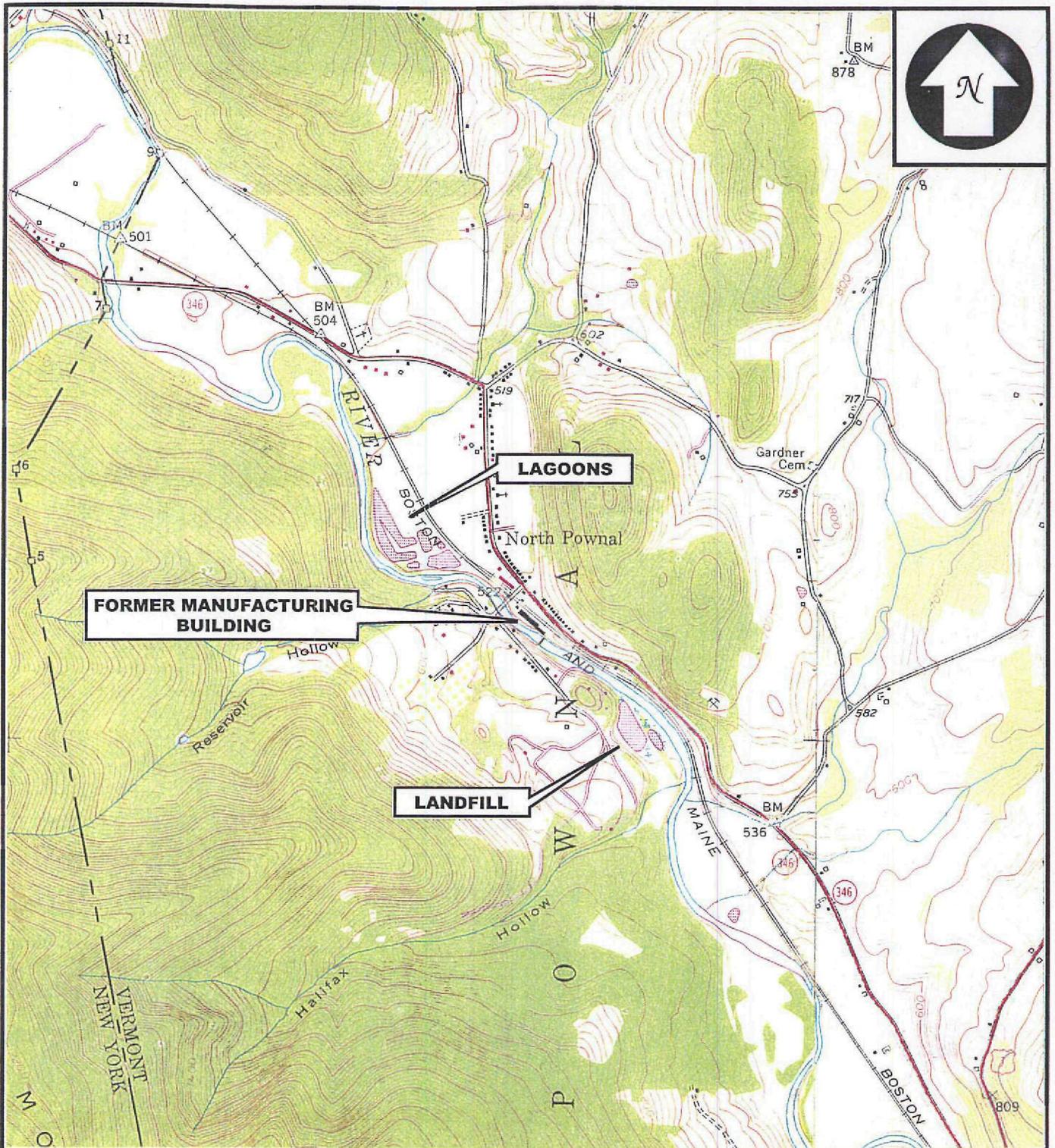
The Pownal Tanning Company operated the facility from approximately 1935 until 1988 when it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 1987 and ceased operations. The tanning of cow and sheep hides used a variety of processes to remove the animal fats and tissues from the hides, and to prepare the hides for tanning, coloring, and finishing. From approximately 1937 until 1962, untreated tanning process wastewater was discharged directly into the Hoosic River via trenches in the basement of the tannery building complex. A separate process building and lagoon system were constructed during the period from 1962 through 1971, to receive and provide limited physical treatment of the tannery waste water. In 1982, a State permitted, lined landfill was constructed on the smaller property to receive dewatered sludge from the lagoons. The landfill was partially covered. In 1983, a portion of the lagoons was covered.

A final Site investigation to identify the full nature and extent of site contamination, known as the Remedial Investigation (RI) and a study to identify potential options for addressing contamination at the Site, known as the Feasibility Study (FS), was completed in July 2002. A plan detailing EPA's preferred alternative to address Site contamination and potential exposure risks was presented to the community in a Proposed Plan for formal public comment in Summer of 2002 and EPA issued their selected cleanup alternative in the Record of Decision, dated September 2002.

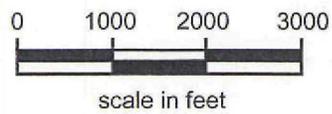
Cleanup activities on the site were initiated in September 2003, and will continue through September 2004. The cleanup will consist of a large excavation effort to remove up to 10 feet of tannery sludge from two of the lagoons. The sludge will be blended with inert materials that will absorb moisture and strengthen the material so that it can be placed in a lined landfill on the site, where it will be covered with a solid waste cap.

## **Community Profile**

North Pownal is not separately incorporated, but is part of the town of Pownal, Vermont. Pownal was incorporated in 1767. In the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of North Pownal was determined to be 3,560.



BASE MAP IS A PORTION OF THE FOLLOWING 7.5' USGS QUADRANGLES:  
 NORTH POWNAL, VT-NY, 1954, PHOTOREVISED 1980; POWNAL, VERMONT 1954,



**Figure 1**  
**SITE LOCATION MAP**  
 REMEDIAL INVESTIGATION/FEASIBILITY STUDY  
 POWNAL TANNERY  
 POWNAL, VERMONT



Boott Mills South  
 Foot of John Street  
 Lowell, MA 0185  
 (978)970-5600

QUADRANGLE  
 LOCATION



TRC PROJ. NO.: 02136-0220-01N91

EPA CONTRACT NO.: 68-W6-0042

RAC SUBCONTRACTOR NO.: 107061

The Town has a few small industrial businesses, and several private and commercial farms that produce milk, fruits and vegetables are located in the Town. Local educational institutions include only one grammar school (K-6). The middle school and high school are located in Bennington, Vermont.

North Pownal is governed by a Select Board of five members. Three of the Select Board are elected for three year terms, on a rotating basis (i.e. one three year term is elected each year), and the other two members are elected annually for one year terms. The Select Board has governing authority for the Town, and all budgetary decisions are subject to Select Board approval. All appointments to local boards are also made by the Select Board.

### **Community Involvement and Concerns**

Bennington County has had significant community exposure to Superfund Site cleanups over the past several years since there are three other Superfund sites located nearby in the Town of Bennington, Vermont (Bennington Landfill, Tansitor Electronics, and Burgess Brothers).

In 1998 when EPA last conducted formal community interviews, interest and concern over the Pownal Tannery Superfund Site was relatively high. EPA has held a number of public meetings at the site since it was added to the National Priorities List (1998). EPA also produced several Fact Sheets during this time period to aid in keeping the community informed about site plans and activities.

Since 1998, a number of citizen concerns related to the building and landfill have been addressed, through a Non-Time Critical Removal Action conducted at the Site.

Nevertheless, community interest and concern remains high at the site. In 1999, the Town of Pownal was awarded approximately a \$100,000 grant from EPA to evaluate redevelopment opportunities at the site, after cleanup is accomplished. The Town quickly formed a Reuse Committee, comprised of local residents and town officials, to guide the site evaluation. The Town then hired a planning consultant to carry out the details of the evaluation, and that project is ongoing.

Despite the various cleanup activities conducted by EPA to address the contamination in the abandoned buildings and the landfill (Time Critical Removal Action completed by EPA in 1994, and Non-Time Critical Removal Action completed in December 2000) community concern at the site is still high, as the lagoons, ground water, and the Hoosic River impacts have not yet been assessed.

A summary of the current citizen and Town concerns is presented below.

### **Town Reuse of the Site**

- The Town is interested in using the Site for a beneficial purpose once the contamination is addressed. Towards that end, the Town received a \$100,000 grant from EPA to study potential plans for reuse of the Site. The primary Site use being considered by the Town is for construction of a new waste water treatment plant to alleviate the current condition of

direct sewage discharge to the river. Additional reuse plans may include nature trails, athletic fields and other recreational uses that may involve access to the river.

### **Public Health & Safety Issues**

- During the time period when the tannery was operating (the tannery closed in 1987), odors from the facility were noticeable and objectionable. Once the plant operation ceased, the odor problem reduced significantly.
- Some residents have expressed health concerns over the quality of their water, since there is no public water supply, and all water used by local residents is from private water wells.
- One major concern in the Town is the discharge of raw sewage directly into the Hoosic River. There is at least one open sewage discharge to the Hoosic River contained within the Site boundary.

### **Security**

- Town residents and officials previously raised issues about site security, as the Site was not fenced and there were no signs posted to indicate that the area contained hazardous chemicals. This issue has been largely addressed in the Landfill and former Tannery building areas through EPA's recent removal efforts. The Lagoon area is partially fenced, and vehicle access is restricted by a locked gate, though small off-road vehicles can still gain access in places. The perimeter of the lagoon area is posted with signs indicating the presence of hazardous wastes.
- Trespassing continues to be a problem in the lagoon area, as local residents use the area for a variety of recreational purposes including hunting, fishing and off-road motoring.

### **Objectives of this Community Relations Program**

The EPA has developed a focused community relations program to address the needs of the North Pownal community expressed during the interviews. A guiding principle of all community relations activities will be to keep communications as simple and direct as possible, while still providing sufficient information for people to fully understand what is happening at the Site. The EPA will seek to educate local residents of the activities occurring at the Site, the purpose of these activities, and regarding the Superfund process.

The EPA will work closely with local contacts where possible, to monitor changes in community concern and to adjust this community relations program as needed.

## **Planned Community Relations Activities**

The following EPA activities to inform and involve those interested in the Pownal Tannery Site include actions required by the Superfund law and activities developed specifically to respond to the interests expressed during interviews with community members.

### **Establish Information Contacts:**

The EPA has named the individuals listed below as contacts for Site information.

Leslie McVickar  
EPA - New England, Region 1  
1 Congress Street  
Suite 1100  
Boston, MA 02114-2023  
(617) 918-1374

and

Sarah White  
EPA - New England, Region 1  
1 Congress Street  
Suite 1100  
Boston, MA 02114-2023  
(617) 918-1026

and

Pamela Harting-Barrat  
EPA – New England, Region 1  
1 Congress Street  
Suite 1100  
Boston, MA 02114-2023  
(617) 918-1318

and

Brian Woods  
Vermont Agency for Natural Resources  
Department of Environmental Conservation  
103 S. Main Street, West Building  
Waterbury, Vermont 05671  
(802) 241-3885

The EPA will include the names and phone numbers of these contacts in all public informational documents and news releases.

### **Establish and Maintain Information Repositories**

The EPA will send fact sheets, technical summaries, site reports, general Superfund information and other Site related material to the information repository in North Pownal, Vermont and Boston, Massachusetts to insure information is readily available to all interested parties. The EPA has established information repositories at the North Pownal Public Library, as well as at the EPA Records Center in Boston. The address, telephone number, and hours of operation are listed in Appendix B. The information repository will be maintained for the duration of Superfund related activities and information will be added as it becomes available. Many of these documents can be viewed or downloaded from the EPA website:

<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/vt.htm#BENNINGTON>

### **Maintain a Site Mailing List**

The EPA will include all interested officials, residents, community groups, and news media outlets serving the North Pownal area on a site mailing list. To promote the widest possible outreach to interested parties, the EPA will mail all fact sheets, news releases, and other site-related information to everyone on the mailing list. The EPA will update the mailing list to include anyone who provides their name and address on sign-in sheets posted at the entrance to public meetings and information sessions concerning the site. Additionally, fact sheets will include a "coupon" to return to the EPA for those individuals wanting to be added or deleted from the mailing list. Those wanting to be added to the list can also write or call one of the contacts listed in Appendix A.

### **Issue News Releases**

The EPA will issue press releases to the news media and to those on the site mailing list to announce public meetings, public comment periods, initiation of phases of site work, results of site investigations, the release of reports, and EPA decisions on how to proceed at the Site.

**Prepare and Distribute Fact Sheets.** The EPA will issue fact sheets as needed to provide information on the investigation and cleanup of the site, as well as to answer questions raised on any topic of particular concern to the community regarding the investigation and method to address contamination.

The EPA will produce additional fact sheets if an issue of concern arises that would best be addressed by a fact sheet, which can be more comprehensive than a one or two page press release.

While every attempt will be made to minimize the use of technical terminology, some technical and regulatory language will be used to help the reader understand the process and participate by commenting on EPA proposals. The EPA will define any technical or other Superfund specific terms

used. The EPA encourages readers to call or write to the EPA with any questions or comments on the content or readability of informational fact sheets.

### **Public Meetings**

EPA plans to brief the Select Board on a periodic basis as remedial activities progress.

## **APPENDIX A**

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### **OFFICIALS, KEY CONTACTS, AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES**

**A. Federal Elected Officials**

**1. Honorable James M. Jeffords**

Member, United States Senate  
728 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-5141

**2. Honorable Patrick J. Leahy**

Member, United States Senate  
433 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-4242

**3. Honorable Bernard Sanders**

Member, House of Representatives  
2202 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4115

**B. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

**1. Leslie McVickar**

Remedial Project Manager  
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency  
One Congress Street, Suite 1100 (HBT)  
Boston, MA 02203-2211  
(617) 918-1374

**2. Sarah White**

Community Relations Coordinator  
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency  
One Congress Street, Suite 1100 (RAA)  
Boston, MA 02203-2211  
(617) 918-1026

**C. State Elected Officials**

**1. Shepard, Mark L. (State Senator)**

6 Polygraphic Lane  
North Bennington, VT 05257  
(802) 447-7322

**2. Sears, Richard W. (State Senator)**  
343 Matteson Road  
North Bennington, VT 05257  
(802) 442-9139

**3. Bostow, Bill (State Congressman)**  
1225 South Stream Road  
Pownal, VT 05201  
(802) 447-7717

**D. Vermont Agency of Natural Resources**

**1. Brian Woods**  
Vermont Agency of Natural Resources  
Department of Environmental Conservation  
103 South Main Street, West Building  
Waterbury, VT 05671-0301  
(802) 241-3885

**E. Local Officials**

**1. Nelson Brownell, Select Board Chairman**  
P.O. Box 411  
Pownal, VT 05261  
(802) 823-7757

**2. Harry Percey, Select Board Member**  
P.O. Box 411  
North Pownal, VT 05261  
(802) 823-7757

**3. Don Prouty, Select Board Member**  
P.O. Box 411  
Pownal, VT 05261  
(802) 823-7757

**4. Marilyn Gardner, Select Board Member**  
P.O. Box 411  
Pownal, VT 05261  
(802) 823-7757

- 5. Harold Marshall, Select Board Member**  
P.O. Box 411  
Pownal, VT 05261  
(802) 823-7757
- 6. Bill Hayes, Forest Warden**  
1945 Maple Grove Road  
Bennington, VT 05201  
(802) 442-4023
- 7. Vacant, Health Agent**  
P.O. Box 411  
Pownal, VT 05261  
(802) 823-7757
- 8. James Gilbert, Health Officer**  
P.O. Box 411  
Pownal, VT 05261  
(802) 823-7757
- 9. Craig O'Dell, Chief, Pownal Fire Department**  
P.O. Box A  
Pownal, VT 05261  
(802) 823-7757

## **APPENDIX B**

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### **INFORMATION REPOSITORY AND SUGGESTED MEETING LOCATION**

**A. Information Repository**

1. Solomon Wright Public Library  
Main Street  
PO Box 400  
Pownal, VT 05261  
(802) 823-5400

**Hours:**

Monday, 6:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Wednesday, 6:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Thursday, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Friday, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

2. Records Center  
EPA - New England, Region 1  
1 Congress Street  
Boston, MA 02114  
(617) 573-5729

**Hours:**

Monday-Friday, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

**B. Suggested Meeting Location**

1. Pownal Elementary School

## **APPENDIX C**

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### **NEWSPAPER ARTICLES PERTAINING TO THE SITE**

TRANSCRIPT

NORTH ADAMS, MA  
DAILY 11.117

WEDNESDAY  
MAR 16 1994

NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY, INC.

# EPA accelerating tannery cleanup

## Former Pownal Tanning Co. already designated Superfund site

by DAVID WILLIAMS  
Special to The Transcript

**POWNAI** — The former Pownal Tanning Co. has been accepted or accelerated cleanup under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund, according to state and local officials.

This means the site, originally scheduled for a potentially lengthy cleanup, will be dealt with by federal authorities much sooner. The state remains responsible for a portion of the cleanup costs.

Since the closing of the mill and an associated power generating facility about four years ago, the properties, located on the banks of the Hoosac River, have been in a spidily deteriorating state. There remain serious problems with the property despite a partial cleanup supervised by EPA Superfund personnel last spring.

During the preliminary cleanup, controls apparently containing oils and solvents were removed from the 19th century structure, and containers of what was apparently unstable solvent were exploded nearby. While most entrances have been boarded up and notices of asbestos contamination posted, chain-link fences sag in places, most windows are broken and there is at least one gaping hole in a wall large enough for a child to enter.

The tannery during operation specialized in the chrome tanning of sheepskins. In similar operations, the standard method of chrome tanning involves the use of acids for the removal of the wool and the use of Chromium for the tanning process itself. Chromium is a toxic heavy metal. Despite the fact the tanning operation apparently dumped its refuse, chemicals and otherwise into open "lagoons" near Dean Road, the ques-

tions of serious groundwater contamination remains unanswered.

The Superfund, a federal program supervised by the EPA, requires the use of matching funds. While the Superfund pays 90 percent of the costs associated with the cleanup, the state bears responsibility for the remaining 10 percent.

The money is already available for Vermont's share of the expenses. The state will use about \$360,000 obtained in judgment against

former owners as the state's portion of cleanup expenses. Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources currently controls the money, which has been collecting interest since the original judgment on Nov. 20, 1992.

Originally, in a public hearing on Sept. 2, 1993, Richard Phillips, director of enforcement for the Division of Natural Resources, suggested the settlement might be diverted to other uses. Town minutes quote Phillips as saying, "The de-

partment has been considering other priorities for its use."

The possibility the funds could be diverted to other uses was given impetus when Pownal selectmen failed to file a timely application for the funds to be used locally. The situation was apparently resolved when Gov. Howard Dean sided with local usage of the funds in a letter of Feb. 25, 1994.

Whether there will remain funds to repair other deficiencies stem-

See Superfund, Page 8

# Superfund

(Continued from page 1)

thing from the tannery property is uncertain, but increasingly unlikely given the problems remaining.

There remains a number of dwellings in North Pownal originally constructed for the use of tannery workers. According to state documents, at least 10 of these houses are straight-lining, or discharging household sewage directly into the Hoosac River. According to assistant health officer Melody Cannavan, there may be an additional 11.

Phillips has stated his agency will investigate the other dwellings when the weather permits.

In addition, the tannery originally supplied water through its own water system to at least some employee dwellings. That system, now the Pownal Water Co., currently supplies its customers directly from an open reservoir, without treatment of any kind.

According to Cannavan, the water has been under an "order to boil" since at least 1992, and can be legally classified as "unusable for any purpose." Residents have at times had tree bark and other debris delivered through household faucets. Residents on the system are attempting to form a fire district to supply potable water. Since ownership of the system has passed on, any funds remaining after the cleanup are unlikely to be used to alleviate the problem.

A date has not yet been set for final cleanup to begin. As with preliminary work, the EPA is expected to bring in its own workers to complete the job.

To: Terry Connelly  
From: Carroll Killen

Date: 11/2/94

2

# Wood pellet manufacturer eyes tannery

**JAMES THERRIEN**  
BANNER STAFF WRITER

**POWNAI** — The owner of a wood pellet manufacturing business in Adams, Mass., is taking a second look at the former Pownal Tanning Co. site for possible expansion of his company.

Averill Cook of Williamstown, Mass., owner of Catamount Pellet Fuel Co., said this week that he is exploring the North Pownal site and availability of any federal or state assistance for locating a business there.

After razing most or all of the existing mill structures at the site, Cook said his firm would likely construct new buildings and seek to use the existing hydropower facility to power the manufacturing operation.

The total cost, including razing the former tannery mill structures and dealing with any hazardous waste problems, would "cost a couple of million dollars to really make a viable business," Cook estimated.

The hazardous waste problems "are not insurmountable," Cook said, referring to the on-site buried tanning wastes and wastes

inside the factory buildings. The property has been the site of testing by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, which is considering placing it on the hazardous waste Superfund cleanup list, and the state Agency of Natural Resources.

Boston & Maine Railroad lines near the factory and Route 346 make the site desirable from a shipping and receiving standpoint, Cook said.

The Catamount Pellet Fuel Co. takes waste wood, cardboard and papers and presses it into pellets that can be used like

coal as a fuel. Cook looked at sites in Pownal, including the Northeast Wood Products site and the former tannery, before establishing his Adams factory in an industrial park at the former Arnold Print Works site off Route 8.

The former tannery closed in bankruptcy in 1989. The grounds, buildings, some of which date back to textile operations in the 19th century, and a waste treatment and sludge dumping site, have been the target of investigations by environmental agencies.

## FOR THE RECORD

### Weather

Today, morning rain turning to afternoon showers. High: 60. Tonight, showers. Low: 42. Tomorrow, cloudy. High: 50. For updates call 362-2000.

### Hospital

Sunday, Oct. 30  
Admissions

Virginia Browe of Bennington.  
Monday, Oct. 31

### Admissions

Mary Lou Albert of Bennington, Anna Mears of Bennington, Francis Smith of Granville, N.Y., Robin Wilson of North Hoosick, N.Y., Harry Cipperly of Hoosick Falls, N.Y.

### Discharges

Gertrude Butler of Bennington, Karen Gosselin and son of Bennington, Helen Mentiply of Hoosick Falls, N.Y., Cathy

**BENNINGTON** — Bennington County VFW Post 1332 has announced that the state service officer of the Veterans of Foreign Wars will be at their post on Saturday, Nov. 5, from 9 to 11:30 p.m., to assist veterans and their dependants in VA related entitlements.

### Meetings

#### TUESDAY

Shaftsbury School Board  
Where: Shaftsbury school  
When: Nov. 1, 7 p.m.  
On the agenda: Re-warning of bond issue, regular business.

#### Arlington Select Board

Where: Fisher School  
When: Nov 1, 7:30 p.m.  
On the agenda: Informational hearing for ballot.

4-0-4

WinFour  
1-9-9-0

**CONCORD, N.H. (AP)** — Here are the winning numbers selected Monday in the daily New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine lotteries:

Pick 3

9-2-6

Pick 4

5-9-7-1

### Court record

**BENNINGTON** — Yesterday in Vermont District Court:

Aimee M.F. St. Hilaire, 19, of Pownal, pleaded not guilty to a felony charge of driving to endanger on Aug. 18 when police said she was driving too fast for road conditions and caused an accident that caused the deaths of Maria Green and Brandy

lawful restraint and custodial interference, and misdemeanor charges of domestic assault, violation of an abuse prevention order and contempt of court after police said he struck a family member, locked her in a room and took their child without permission on Saturday.

Police said the alleged victim had obtained a restraining order against Maguire in August. His bail was set at \$5,000 and he was lodged at Rutland Correctional Center.

### Police blotter

Teen-ager is struck  
by car on School Street

**BENNINGTON** — Police are investigating a car/pedestrian accident that occurred yesterday on School Street.

This hitchhiker  
Kathleen Mills, c

NOV 1 1994

NEWPORT DAILY EXPRESS

NEWPORT, VT  
DAILY 5,000

TUESDAY  
MAR 5 1996

NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY, INC.

VA UP

# State Trying To Beat EPA In Pownal Tannery Cleanup

POWNAL (AP) — State officials are lobbying to keep a polluted industrial site in Pownal from going on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list.

"If I let that thing go on the Superfund list, it'd be 15 years before we could get it cleaned up and redeveloped," Gov. Howard Dean said. "If we're ever going to get jobs in Pownal, the tannery is one of the few places it could happen."

The governor said he preferred to have the state supervise the cleaning, although he still wants the federal government to share the cost.

A Connecticut developer, Jan Exman, has bought the mortgage on the 840-acre Pownal Tanning Co. property from the First National Bank of Boston for an undisclosed sum, and is negotiating with the town on a settlement for back taxes.

He is also beginning talks with state and federal environmental officials over who will pay for the cleanup. Under a new EPA initiative, the agency can release Exman from some or all of the liability for cleanup costs so he can take possession of the property and build something new there.

Exman said he would probably

knock down the decrepit old tannery building — its bricks and timbers are said to be soaked with toxins — and build a modern plant. The tannery and its toxin-filled landfill and sludge lagoons sit on the banks of the Hoosic River. The site underwent a \$700,000 emergency cleanup by the EPA last year, but much remains to be done.

WEDNESDAY  
MAR 6 1996

NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY, INC.

## State tries to salvage Pownal tannery site

The Associated Press

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The tannery and its toxin-filled landfill and sludge lagoons sit on the banks of the Hoosic River. The site underwent a \$700,000 emergency cleanup by the EPA last year, but much remains to be done.

EPA site manager Terry Conolly said the soils around the plant are full of lead, chromium, organic solvents, petroleum distillates and low levels of dioxins — not unusual for a tannery. The EPA intends to study the extent of the contamination at the site, he said.

TUESDAY  
MAR 5 1996

NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY, INC.

## Dean Wants State To Clean Tannery

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The tannery and its toxin-filled landfill and sludge lagoons sit on the banks of the Hoosic River. The site underwent a \$700,000 emergency cleanup by the EPA last year, but much remains to be done.

EPA site manager Terry Conolly said the soils around the plant are full of lead, chromium, organic solvents, petroleum distillates and low levels of dioxins — not unusual for a tannery. The EPA intends to study the extent of the contamination at the site, he said.

# State wants cleanup of Pownal tannery

POWNAI (AP) - State officials are lobbying to keep a polluted industrial site in Pownal from going on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list.

"If I let that thing go on the Superfund list, it'd be 15 years before we could get it cleaned up and redeveloped," Gov. Howard Dean said. "If we're ever going to get jobs in Pownal, the tannery is one of the few places it could happen."

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JUN 22 1995 11:30

# State, EPA Mull Tannery Cleanup

By PETER CRABTREE  
Herald Staff

**POWNAL** — Concerned that the former Pownal tannery may be declared a Superfund site, state officials are urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to streamline the cleanup process and help redevelop the old mill.

The tannery, which sits beside the Hoosic River, has undergone an emergency cleanup by the EPA.

## Pownal

The agency's regional office has recommended that Washington place the hazardous waste site on the National Priorities List.

State officials fear that would impede the redevelopment of the mill. That project, which local selectmen have sought for years, has taken on a higher profile since Gov. Howard B. Dean opposed the creation of a casino resort at an idle dog track here.

The EPA plans to return to the tannery next month so it can perform "rather extensive investigation work," according to Brian Woods, a hazardous materials specialist with the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

The EPA's remedial division will determine what chemicals remain on the site and how much of a risk

they pose to the environment. Woods said the decision whether to place the tannery on the Superfund list is likely to depend upon the "suite of remedies" that are proposed and their cost.

"What the state is looking for is an agreement with the EPA that the site, if it's listed, will move through the Superfund process in a timely fashion and that NPL listing won't act as an impediment to any potential redevelopment," said Woods.

"The state is trying to bring some kind of certainty into the Superfund process," Woods added. "We're trying to get the EPA to think about ways of streamlining the process at this particular site and we're trying to get them involved in the potential redevelopment of portions of this property. They have a nationwide redevelopment initiative and they're very anxious to be involved in projects that are successes."

According to Woods, the EPA's willingness to invest more time and money on the tannery is an encouraging sign.

"Normally, with funds tight, they would be very reluctant to devote resources to a site that's not on the NPL officially," said Woods. "But"

(See Page 9: Tannery)

Post-it brand fax transmission

1 of pages

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TERRY CONNELLY

Co. USEPA

Dept. 16/UT SUPERFUND

Fax 617-573-9662

Woods

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RUTLAND HERALD 6/22/95

617-573-9662

In this case, because of the potential redevelopment issue and the potential for success they might see there — and also because they see it as an opportunity for good things to happen environmentally — they're willing to step forward to do some of this work even before the NPL listing. And that's a good sign. It shows that they are interested in a way they normally wouldn't be."

"We think we can come to some kind of understanding," Woods said.

"If the tannery makes the Superfund list, then the EPA will pay for

the bulk of the cleanup, with the state contributing 10 percent of the cost, according to Woods.

The tannery became an "orphaned site" after the Pownal Tanning Co. declared bankruptcy and shut down operations in 1988, according to Woods. In 1992, the company's corporate officers agreed to pay the state \$870,000 towards cleaning up the property.

The settlement capped a five-year effort to force the company and its executives to take responsibility for the illegal dumping of hazardous wastes.

land, who died Monday afternoon. The funeral was held Wednesday afternoon at St. Joseph's Church in Rutland. Burial followed in the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. The Rev. Robert Warzocha, pastor of St. Bridget's Church, officiated at the funeral. Burial followed in the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Ministers of the Holy Sepulchre Church and Alex B. Organist were Deacons. The Deacons were S. Castleton, Raymer Jakubowski and P. Rutland. Michael P. Peter Miller of East Wallingford officiated at the prayer service.

The prayer service was held at 7 p.m. in the Holy Sepulchre Church.

Maria WALLINGFORD service for Maria

Henry

# Study: Demolish building at tannery

## Engineers advise redevelopment and reuse of North Pownal site

By EILEEN E. FLYNN  
North Adams Transcript

**POWNAL, Vt.** — Dubois and King, Inc., of Randolph, has completed its structural site evaluation on the former North Pownal tannery complex and recommend demolition of one of the buildings.

The \$15,000 study was supported by a grant from the Legislature and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

Dubois and King, Inc., in conjunction with architects Nimsz, Berryhill & Figiel, recommended redevelopment and reuse of the tannery. The engineering firm strongly suggested demolition of Building One "as soon as practicable." The study also urged the town to remove or repair the roof on the four-story structure.

Project Manager David Cobb, along with Gregory Burke, of the Bennington County Regional Commission, and Lance Matteson of the Bennington County Industrial Corporation met with the Board of Selectmen Thursday night to discuss what steps need to be taken.

Confusing issues arose concerning ownership of the tannery, Environmental Protection Agency site testing and town liability for the land. John Flynn and Sons, Inc. own the property against which the town has a lien, and Jan Exman, of Connecticut holds the papers. The town still considers Exman a player in the tannery's future.

Should the town use its current community development grant and apply for another grant to secure and stabilize the tannery be-

fore the ownership issue is resolved? Selectman Nelson Brownell felt the town should try to make the property marketable, as recommended in the report, which suggested providing additional chain-link fence, repairing the current fence and boarding up all windows and doors at the ground level.

"If you board it up and fence it up, you're making it more marketable," he said. "We've been trying to find a way to sell it as it is now."

Matteson wondered if the town should try to find another owner to handle the future use of the tannery. He noted the importance of attaining more information from the EPA and said the site may be eligible for a Brownfield Grant, depending on the EPA's findings.

Chairman Frank Lamb invited Matteson and Burke to attend Government Day in Montpelier on Feb. 11 and to present Gov. Howard Dean and the necessary agencies with the tannery report.

"For the first time when we go to Montpelier, we're going to have something in our hands," Lamb said.

Selectman Henry Strohmaier agreed, adding, "The governor said, 'You have to come to me with a plan and then I can do something for you.'"

Burke, Matteson and Jon Peaslee, chairman of the Pownal Community Development Committee, will meet again with the Select Board next month to discuss the balance of the community development grant. The deadline for the grant had been extended until June so the town could proceed with the tannery evaluation.

NORTH ADAMS TRANSCRIPT

NORTH ADAMS, MA  
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FRIDAY  
JAN 31 1997

NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY, INC.

Taney

# Pownal to seek legal advice on tannery

By ERNESTO A. BURDEN  
North Adams Transcript

POWNAL, Vt. — Lance Matteson, executive director of the Jennings County Industrial Corporation, met with the Board of Selectmen Thursday night to recommend what steps the town should take regarding the North Pownal Tannery site.

A structural evaluation revealed that at least one of the tannery buildings must be demolished soon and recommended salvaging the other two. But since learning the results of the study in January, the board has been unsure how to proceed.

State officials recently suggested the board seek legal advice on such issues as ownership of the tannery and hazardous waste liability. Matteson will distribute request for proposal (RFP) forms to a selection of law firms the board chooses.

The town will use money from its community development grant to pay for the services and will not spend more than \$10,000.

"The \$5,000 to \$10,000 range is realistic," Matteson told the board. "You want to get your money's worth, and you want them to have some experience with this issue."

The board hopes to attain a comprehensive written report from the legal advisers, which clarifies the implications of holding a tax sale and assuming town ownership of the property.

Presently, John Flynn and Sons, Inc. hold the deed to the tannery, and Connecticut businessman Jan Exman has the mortgage papers. But the Flynn's have not been in contact with the town about the site's status.

The board plans to write to the owners to find out where they stand legally. "We just want to bring them on board," Chairman

Frank Lamb said. "If they don't want to be on board, they can jump off the train."

Selectman Henry Strohmaier pointed out, "They're the rightful owners, whether they owe taxes or not. We should find out their plans."

"It's a very civilized thing to do," Matteson observed.

The board and Matteson agreed the town's Attorney Margaret Lillie and state agencies involved with the tannery project should be included in the legal process.

Selectman Nelson Brownell said Lillie already has done research on the site.

Matteson offered to map out a strategic plan of action for the board.

"At least we have the engineering report, and several interested parties are inquiring about the property," he noted. "We have some of the legal pieces of

the puzzle, although we don't have all of them yet. We may have something from the EPA this summer. At least we'll have something informal.

"This is to give the town and the Select Board an idea of the choices... what are the options?"

The town has not received any conclusive reports from the Environmental Protection Agency on the hazardous waste materials at the site, but Matteson said the EPA has been taking samples for testing.

"The initial screenings seem to be encouraging about the part of the building that's salvagable," he said, adding board members should "keep the heat on elected representatives in Washington for the EPA to move as quickly and generously as they can on this site."

Matteson will meet with the board again soon regarding the RFPs.

5-15-97

TERRY  
- CONNELLY

# Developer seeks to foreclose tannery property

JAMES THERRIEN  
Staff Writer

**POWNAL** - The developer who holds a mortgage on the former Pownal Tanning Co. property is seeking to foreclose on several hundred acres of land surrounding the vacant mill.

Jan Exman of Durham, Conn., filed the action in Bennington Superior Court through his Pownal Development Corp. The suit names as defendants the bankrupt Pownal Tanning Co., the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Vermont Department of Taxes, and Staff Industries Inc., a private firm with a lien on the property.

Exman, who purchased the property's outstanding mortgage from the First National Bank of Boston in 1995, wants to foreclose on all the lands except for the factory site itself, according to his attorney, James Cormier. The polluted tannery site is still being evaluated by federal and state agencies to determine what type of cleanup is required.

At one time, the tannery owned about 900 acres of mostly wooded land around the 19th century mill site, much of it stretching west from the banks of the Hoosic River into New York state.

Exman also is asking the court to order the four defendants to either pay all the outstanding mortgage balance (\$970,090), plus taxes owed and maintenance, insurance and other costs or relinquish their rights to the property.

Cormier said it is not likely the defunct Pownal Tanning Co. will move to pay the costs. The factory closed in 1988 and the owners declared bankruptcy.

The other defendants are named as defendants because they hold liens on the property. The Agency of Natural Resources has an attachment for \$175,000 for pollution cleanup costs; the Department of Taxes is owed \$39,155 for sales and use and withholding taxes; and Staff Industries Inc. is a private firm that obtained liens totalling \$25,895 for work and equipment supplied to the tannery owners during the 1980s.

The Town of Pownal is not a party in the suit. "I haven't a clue at this point," Select Board Chairman Frank Lamb said Wednesday of the court action. He said he plans to meet with

*Please see POWNAL, Page 12*

# Developer seeks foreclosure

*POWNAL, from Page 1*

Town Agent Margaret Lillie to discuss the legal implications for Pownal, which is owed more than \$200,000 in back taxes.

Cormier said, however, that "the town is sitting pretty," since Exman still would have to reach some agreement with the town before selling any of the land. The difference, he said, is that Exman would hold a title rather than a mortgage, entering any negotiations with the town over back taxes.

In purchasing the property's mortgage from the bank, Exman's development firm acquired the rights to the amount still owed on a \$6 million mortgage the tannery took out in 1984, about four years before production ceased. The balance due in principal and interest was \$970,090 as of April 15.

And the suit asks the court to define the priority of the defen-

dants' claims on the property and their interest in it, and that the plaintiff be granted a writ of possession of the property.

A separate motion asks that the redemption period for anyone wishing to pay all the outstanding costs to take possession be shortened to 30 days from the date of a judgment to allow the plaintiff time to market the property during the peak selling season.

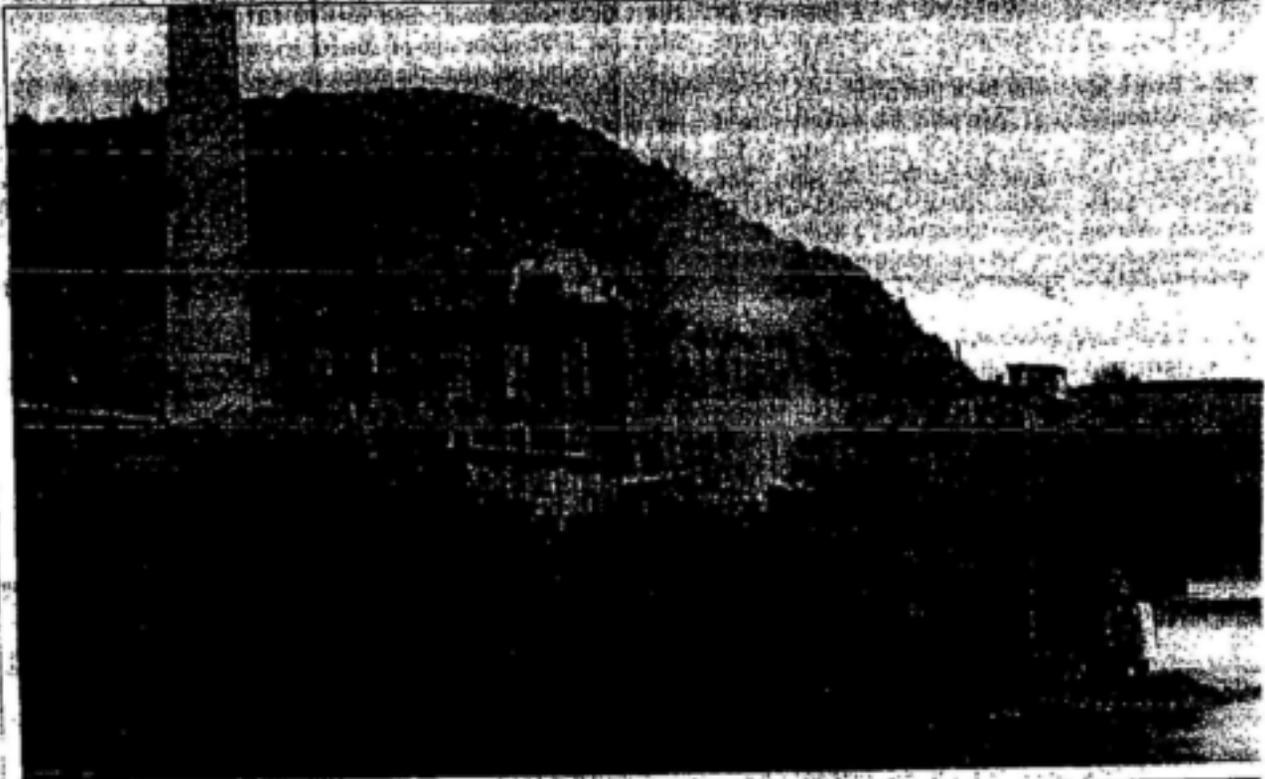
Cormier said he is not certain what response the other defendants will make. The Agency of Natural Resources might not object, he said, because the polluted areas of the property are not affected.

Exman could not be reached for comment Wednesday. He also has expressed an interest in developing the dilapidated factory if an agreement can be reached on the environmental problems.

P. 01

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# FIRE POINTS UP TANNERY



## Firefighters: "We were lucky this time"

BARBARA BENNETT  
Staff Writer

POWNAI — Firefighters rushed into action Thursday when a fire was reported at the Pownal Tannery.

They called for backup, summoning a fire company from Bennington and two from Williamstown, Mass. Luckily, the fire turned out to be a brush fire on the back side of the former tannery.

The pile of burning driftwood, which officials say is suspicious, was extinguished quickly, preventing flames or embers from reaching the interior of the large abandoned building.

"We were lucky this time," said David O'Dell, president of the Pownal Center Fire Department, expressing dismay at what would happen if the inside of the building ever caught fire.

O'Dell said officials from the environmental protection agency told firefighters not to

*Please see LUCKY, Page 12*



Photo  
Firefighters were called Thursday to a fire at the abandoned tannery brush fire did not involve the building, but officials called it suspicious

# ITS UP TANNERY HAZARDS



Photos by James Therrien

Firefighters were called Thursday to a fire at the abandoned tannery in Pownal. The brush fire did not involve the building, but officials called it suspicious.

## *Pownal may get its due from Tannery*

**BARBARA BENNETT**  
Staff Writer

**POWNALE** Select board members were given the lowdown Thursday on what they can do to get some or all of the \$200,000 in taxes owed the town for the abandoned Pownal Tannery.

Attorney Peter Van Oot told board members they can either take a passive role and wait for the property to be sold, which would result in the taxes being paid in order to get the land deed, they could take a more aggressive role and set up a tax sale for the property, or they could try to sue the Pownal Tanning Company, which has filed for bankruptcy.

"It's a complex and challenging site with a lot of different players," said Van Oot, who was hired with community development grant money.

The environmentally hazardous site is still legally owned by the Pownal Tanning Company whose principals are John Flynn and Sons, Inc., Van Oot explained. Jan Exman and the Pownal Development Corp. hold the mortgage on the property.

Exman is currently attempting to subdivide the property and foreclose on approximately 1,000 acres of woodlands that are not contaminated, according to Van Oot. He doesn't want the rest of the property, which consists of the large mill area, a former hydro-power dam, 22 acres of lagoons and a 7-acre lined landfill site.

The state of Vermont is contesting Exman's attempt to foreclose on only a portion of the property, Van Oot told the board. But if he is successful in foreclosing on the

*Please see DUE, Page 12*

## Pownal could get back taxes

*DUE, from Page 1*

woodlands, there is potential he could sell it and the town would get its back taxes, he said.

But that could leave the town with an abandoned environmental hazard that needs to be cleaned up or sold. Van Oot said funds for clean up are another issue. The EPA has nearly met its \$2 million per site cap at the tannery.

The town has about \$300,000 in

escrow from a partial settlement with the Pownal Tannery and the Flynn's which is available for decontamination, but Van Oot predicted that amount would not go far at the site.

If the property is put up for a tax sale, the town may at least get its tax money and someone to take responsibility for the clean up, Van Oot said. He recommended a tax sale.

## Fire could have been worse

*LUCKY, from Page 1*

spray water on the inside of the of the building because hazardous materials inside the abandoned leather-tanning plant will run down into the nearby Hoosic River and pollute it.

"We could get another 20 trucks here in no time if we needed them," O'Dell said at the scene Thursday. But once they got there, firefighters would have to wait for confirmation from the EPA before spraying water into the building, he explained.

Environmental officials could not be reached Thursday.

The condition of the decaying building would most likely prevent firefighters from going inside the building to fight the fire in any event, second assistant chief of the Pownal Valley Fire Department, Kim Kolakowski said.

"The reality here is there's nothing in there worth a firefighter's life," Kolakowski said looking at the deteriorating red building. "That's not to say we wouldn't go

in ... the circumstances would dictate what you're going to do."

O'Dell said the denseness of the neighborhood is another factor fire officials would have to consider when fighting a large fire at the North Pownal site. He predicted firefighters would drive through the surrounding streets looking for spot fires caused by flying embers from the building.

He feels a major fire would result in contamination of the river whether water was sprayed in it or not. At least a third of the building hangs out over the water and would fall in if it burned he said, as would other river-side walls and debris.

The brush fire was contained near an outside corner of the brick-walled building on the river side of the Tannery, O'Dell and Pownal Fire Warden William Hayes said. There is no question that the fire was started by a human, Hayes said, due to its surroundings. There are currently no suspects in the 11:30 a.m. fire, officials said.

BENNINGTON BANNER

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NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY, INC.

# EPA: Treat any tannery fires as normal

JAMES THERRIEN  
Staff Writer

PAGE ONE

**POWNAL** - The federal Environmental Protection Agency has cleared Pownal firefighters to combat any fires at the former Pownal Tanning Co. mill as normal structure fires.

Tom Depollo, chairman of the county's Local Emergency Planning Committee and a firefighter with the Bennington Fire Department, said that after a request for clarification he received the approval recently from the EPA's Boston office. He has notified Pownal Valley Fire Department of the change.

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**An EPA cleanup project a few years ago apparently removed stored hazardous materials and the worst of the pollution from the mill.**

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The federal agency had at one time restricted fighting or even pouring water on any blaze at the vacant factory without prior EPA approval. Agency officials were concerned about toxic emissions in smoke and that

materials stored in the mill might run off with water into the nearby Hoosic River.

However, an EPA cleanup project a few years ago apparently removed stored hazardous materials and the worst of the pollution from the mill, Depollo said.

He said he contacted the EPA following a July 24 fire at the site, which he responded to as a part of the countywide planning group. Pownal firefighters said at the time that they still were operating under the EPA's previous instructions, prohibiting the use of water on the building.

The July 24 fire turned out to

be a bonfire set by juveniles against the back wall of the brick factory, which did not spread to the interior.

Concerns also have been voiced privately by fire officials that a fire at the Route 346 mill would pose significant hazards for firefighters - even without the threat of hazardous materials. Floors are buckling and sections of the three-story brick structure have crumbling walls and appear a threat to collapse in the event of a fire.

The mill has been vacant since the tanning firm filed for bankruptcy about nine years ago.

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Sunday, August 17, 1997

Metro Editor  
Rob Eley, 660-1862  
or (800) 427-3124  
...

**Sam  
Hemingway**

## State in over its head in cleanup

**N**ice to see they reached an agreement in Lyndon last week so something will be done about the polluted Superfund site formerly known as Parker Landfill.

Under the deal, the Environmental Protection Agency, the state and 13 companies held responsible for dumping hazardous waste at the now-closed landfill will spend \$7.8 million to cap the mess and perpetually monitor it for leakage.

And nice to see they're making headway in Bennington on another Superfund site, a town-owned landfill riddled with PCBs and other residue dumped there by 18 manufacturers.

Last month, EPA signed off on an \$8 million plan that will allow the town to cap the landfill and design a system to collect polluted underground runoff and treat it at a nearby municipal sewage treatment plant.

Such a bounty of good news is enough to make one think the notoriously slow-as-molasses Superfund program isn't so bad after all — even if it did take almost a decade of dickering in both cases to get something done.

Which brings us to another blotch on Vermont's picture-perfect landscape, the toxic stew at the old Pownal Tanning Co. located in the state's southwestern corner.

The joint has been closed since 1987 and was the source of odor and pollution problems for years before that. Dioxin was found in a nearby home's drinking water supply in 1988, and the EPA did a quickie \$700,000 removal of some of the site's more hazardous waste last year.

Despite all of this unpleasantness, the state has resisted putting the site on the national Superfund list, arguing the state could get the cleanup job done faster.

"If I let that thing go on the Superfund list, it'd be 15 years before we could get it cleaned up and redeveloped," Gov. Howard Dean bellowed in 1996. "If we're ever going to get jobs in Pownal, the tannery is one of the few places where it could happen."

It was a great news-byte at the time, but maybe our fearless leader ought to rethink his position, particularly if he really wants to see the tannery reborn as an industrial jobsite in his lifetime.

The cold-cash reality of the situation is that nothing good is going to happen here under the present situation. Reason: No one has the deep pockets needed to finance a cleanup — except, of course, the big-bad Superfund.

The company that owns the tannery is bankrupt. The state is never going to be able to rustle up the estimated \$4 million-plus it will cost to make the tannery's polluted lagoons, dump and decrepit buildings go away.

"Not having it enrolled in the federal program reduces its prospects to what can best be characterized as uncertain," said Brian Woods of the state Environmental Conservation Department.

Leslie McViekar, an EPA project manager who visited the site last week, agreed, saying the state's position has all but prevented work from proceeding on a cleanup plan. "It's going to take a lot longer to deal with the site without Superfund than with it," she predicted.

Continued inaction could be hazardous to Pownal's health. Quick action by firefighters late last month prevented a fire set by a kid near the plant from reaching the building.

The incident pointed up the fact the tannery remains a disaster waiting to happen. The building, near collapse and encrusted in places with toxic materials, is vulnerable to vandalism. Kids ride bikes near open manholes to polluted lagoons.

And get this: Until the EPA advised them to the contrary last week, firefighters were of the belief that if the tannery did catch fire, it was better to let it burn than hose it down and risk having the water wash toxic residue into the nearby Hoosic River.

Hello, ground control in Montpelier. We have a problem.

*Sam Hemingway is the Free Press state news columnist. His columns appear Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. If you have a comment, phone 660-1850.*

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Editorial

# Not convinced tannery waste all cleaned up

**B**y giving Pownal firefighters the green light to use hoses and other equipment to fight fires at the defunct Pownal Tannery, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency is saying the decaying facility is not a (toxic waste) health threat anymore.

We're not so sure.

The action by the EPA Boston office signaled that the removal five years ago of a stockpile of hazardous material was all the government agency needed to pronounce the end of any danger via pollution to the neighborhood and the Hoosic River should the tannery catch fire.

And according to Tom DePollo, chairman of the county's Local Emergency Planning Committee and a firefighter, what toxic waste is left is nothing more than residue imbedded in the woodwork and other parts of the building. He's convinced it poses no more of an environ-

mental threat than "a house built in the 1920s that has all lead paint" should it catch fire.

That's certainly comforting, but we're a little unnerved that it appears the EPA is saying all is fine simply because they removed some barrels of waste.

State Representative Charlie Palmer, R-Pownal, said he has made numerous requests to the EPA for its tannery studies and conclusions, but to date has "seen no results of anything from the EPA."

We're just not confident all the waste has been dealt with.

There is still a significant amount of waste at the site. Its toxicity and volume are certainly measurable. If these have been measured, we call on the EPA to release its findings so residents can be reassured by them. If they haven't yet been measured, we think a study should be undertaken before Pownal finds itself dealing with a fire on the property.

# Hey — Superfund actually works

BURLINGTON, Vt. — Nice to see they've just reached an agreement in Lyndon so that something will finally be done about the polluted Superfund site formerly known as Parker Landfill.

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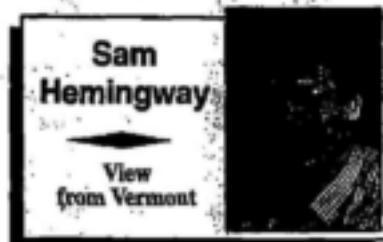
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The cold-cash reality of the situation is that nothing good is ever going to happen here under the present situation. Reason: No one has the deep pockets needed to finance a cleanup — except, of course, the big, bad Superfund.

The company that owns the tannery is bankrupt. And the state is never going to be able to rustle up the estimated \$4 million-plus it will cost to make the tannery's polluted lagoons, dump and decrepit buildings go away.

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Leslie McVickar, an EPA project manager who visited the site earlier this month, agreed, saying the state's position has all but prevented work from proceeding on a

cleanup plan. "It's going to take a lot longer to deal with the site without Superfund than with it," she predicted.

And continued inaction could itself be hazardous to Pownal's health. Quick action by firefighters late last month prevented a blaze set by a kid near the plant from reaching the building itself.

But the incident pointed up the fact the tannery remains a disaster waiting to happen: The building, near collapse and still encrusted in places with toxic materials, is vulnerable to vandalism. Kids ride bikes near open manholes to polluted lagoons.

And get this: Until the EPA advised them to the contrary during McVickar's visit, firefighters were of the belief that if the tannery did catch fire, it was better to let it burn than hose it down and risk having the water wash toxic residue into the nearby Hoosic River.

Hello, ground control in Montpelier. We have a problem.

*Sam Hemingway is the state news columnist for the Burlington (Vt.) Free Press.*

Keene Sentinel 8/24/97

Leslie - FYI/Files  
Sarah

# Mass. wood fuel manufacturer eyes tannery site

ERIK ARVIDSON  
Staff Writer

**POWNAI** — An expanding Massachusetts company that manufactures compressed wood pellets for fuel is reportedly negotiating a deal with the mortgage holder of the former Pownal Tanning Co. site, Jan Exman of Durham, Conn.

Averill H. Cook, president of Catamount Pellet Fuel Corp. in Adams, Mass., has told the select board that he is "in a position to take ownership" of the former tannery site, now unused, from Exman. He is now in the process of gauging the town's support for such an industrial use of the site, board members say.

In a letter to the select board on June 22, Cook wrote, "As you are aware, I continue to have an interest in the redevelopment of the Tannery property. Over the past year, my company has grown, and I have maintained contact with Lance Matteson and Mr. Exman on developments concerning the property. At this point, I am in a position to take ownership of the property from Mr. Exman."

Due to the fact that I propose an industrial application for the site, it is paramount that the board and townspeople understand the implications that go with the return of industry to the location. I understand that some of the board members

have concerns with the type of industry I offer ..." Cook wrote.

"... It is also possible that the town does not want an industrial application brought to this site, and therefore my interests would be best served in finding an alternate location. The opportunities that I am facing require immediate action..."

The select board is visiting the Catamount site to see the operation first-hand at a special meeting Thursday.

Cook, contacted late Tuesday, declined an interview.

Cook's letter went on, "...From my perspective there have been few tangible opportunities for the redevelopment of the property, and I believe that I offer not just one, but several viable solutions to the problems in the area."

Catamount, since it opened at its Printworks Drive location, has had nearby residents continue to complain of wind-blown sawdust and a pungent odor emanating from the plant, officials say.

John Lipa, chairman of the Northern Berkshire Industrial Park and Development Corp., said for some time there was an "ongoing concern by some of the residents who are nearby abutters to the park about the odor that may be emanating from Averill's place," and saw

Please see WOOD, Page 16

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BENNINGTON, VT  
05201

TUESDAY  
AUG 4 1998

NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY, INC.

ERIK ARVIDSON  
Staff Writer *EPA*

**POWNAI** — The Environmental Protection Agency is considering adding the polluted former Pownal Tanning Co. site to the National Superfund Priority List, according to officials.

While making the tannery site a Superfund site would free up more federal funds towards studies and cleanup of the area, a history of long, dragged-out Superfund actions might make the idea of putting the tannery site on the National Priority List (NPL) unpopular with some state officials.

The Pownal Select Board will meet with Gov. Howard Dean Wednesday to discuss the EPA's proposal for the tannery becoming a Superfund site. According to officials, Dean has opposed past efforts to place the tannery

on the list because other Superfund actions around the state have proved costly and slow-footed in progress.

To date, the EPA has conducted a removal action of the more hazardous waste storage areas at the tannery, but has exhausted the amount it can spend under the limited authority it has with the site on a non-Superfund status, according to attorney Peter Van Oot.

"It's a trade-off," Van Oot said of the Superfund listing. "It frees up a lot of money for cleaning up and studying, but the NPL is a very, very expensive and time-consuming process. It's not a streamlined, quick fix. It's a long, expensive process."

For the tannery to be made a Superfund site, the EPA would

# Tannery site is Superfund candidate

PAGE ONE

first make an investigation of the site and give the site a score based on how much waste there is and its proximity to public pathways and water sources, Van-Oot said. If the tannery is given a certain high score, it will be ranked on the priority list. Funding for cleanup is based on the ranking, Van Oot said. The state, although it also shares in the cleanup cost, loses a certain amount of control over the cleanup process once the site becomes a Superfund site, Van Oot added.

"The problem with the Pownal tannery site is there's no apparent viable private party to spend money on the cleanup," Van Oot said. The Pownal Tanning Co. is defunct, and current mortgage-holder Jan Exman isn't in a position to be held liable. "That doesn't leave you with a lot of alternatives," Van Oot said.

Van Oot explained that there are four categories for the EPA to determine "parties strictly liable" to pay for cleanup. The two categories applicable to the tannery situation include anybody who ever owned the property, or persons that come in and buy it.

"The EPA could spend the money, then go after any one of these parties," Van Oot said.

Exman is trying to foreclose on all of the former tannery property except for the polluted mill parcel, and he's being contested in Bennington Superior Court by the state Agency of Natural Resources and the Town of Pownal. Van Oot represents Pownal in the case.

The mill site has been eyed by Averill Cook, president of Catamount Pellet Fuel Corp., of Adams, Mass., who has been negotiating with Exman a possible sale, and has recently solicited the town's input on his industrial company taking over the mill.

*For your  
Lestic-bleed  
Scot*



*Pownal*  
*sent to Lester*

**Associated Press**  
**New England News**

08-07-98 01:02  
**Dean reverses, supports Superfund for Pownal**

POWNAI, Vt. (AP) - Gov. Howard Dean has reversed himself and come out in support of putting the site of the former Pownal Tannery on the federal Superfund hazardous waste cleanup list.

But Dean said he would look to the town's select board for guidance before deciding whether to push the federal Environmental Protection Agency to make the Superfund designation.

"I'll follow their lead because ultimately the people of Pownal have the most to gain or lose by this," Dean told the Rutland Herald.

The governor and state environmental officials met with select board members in Montpelier Wednesday to discuss the pros and cons of a Superfund designation.

Dean said Superfund designation would prompt the federal government to help pay for cleaning up the site, which is expected to cost up to \$40 million. He earlier had said he did not favor Superfund designation, arguing that the process could tie the site up for years and prevent new development.

"The risk is nothing will happen for a long time," Dean said. "The risk of not doing it means there'll be no money to make anything happen."

The governor's recommendation appeared to carry weight with town officials.

"No one is going to come in and spend that kind of money on their own for cleanup," said Laura Rosse, a select board member. "My vote is going to be for us to be listed as a Superfund site. I feel that's the only alternative."

The Pownal Tanning Co. declared bankruptcy and shut its doors in 1988 after dumping industrial chemicals on its site beside the Hoosic River.

Last month, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which has already spent \$700,000 on an emergency cleanup, came out again in favor of placing the tannery on the Superfund's national priorities list.

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# Pownal won't get stuck with bill for tannery cleanup

Associated Press, 08/25/98 15:42

POWNAL, Vt. (AP) - The town of Pownal won't have to pay to clean up the contaminated Pownal tannery property.

That opinion from the Environmental Protection Agency clears the way for the tannery to be designated a Superfund site, meaning it will be decontaminated largely at federal expense.

It also allows the town to proceed with a tax sale to recoup about \$255,000 in delinquent taxes.

"We've waited a long time to get where we're at with the tannery," Selectboard Chairman Frank Lamb said. "That to me is a giant step forward."

While the owners of Superfund sites are generally liable for the cost of cleaning up hazardous wastes, the Pownal Tanning Co. declared bankruptcy in 1988.

The 19th-century mill and its hydroelectric plant have sat idle since then.

Anxious to see the property redeveloped but wary of taking on clean-up costs, the Selectboard met with Gov. Howard Dean and state environmental officials earlier this month to discuss the tannery's future.

With the governor's support, the board voted in favor of having the EPA place the tannery on the Superfund priority on the condition that the town was absolved of liability.

In a letter to the board last week, EPA official Patricia Meaney wrote that the Superfund liability rule does not apply to municipalities that take ownership of contaminated properties through delinquent tax sales.

The only exception is if a town causes or contributes to the release - or threat of release- of hazardous wastes, Meaney wrote.

"Most anybody else who bought it would be part of the cleanup," Lamb said. "We are not."

Meaney also notified the town that it could take title to about 900 acres of uncontaminated woodlands owned by the Pownal Tanning Co. and later sell the land, with neither the town nor the buyer assuming liability for the tannery cleanup, Meaney said.

The selectboard is considering turning the area into a town recreation area.

Lamb also said the land could produce income for the town if it were managed for timber harvests. The town recently

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netted about \$18,000 for timber taken from another parcel, he said.

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Leslie McVicker

WEDNESDAY  
SEP 23 1998

# Judge allows foreclosure on land near tannery

## But contaminated Pownal Tannery can be abandoned for others to clean up

MediaNews Service

PAGE ONE

**EPA**  
POWNAI, VT. — A Superior Court judge has decided that the Connecticut mortgage-holder of the former Pownal Tanning Co. site can foreclose on 830 acres of non-contaminated woodlands and leave behind the polluted mill.

In a decision issued last week, Judge John P. Meaker ruled that Jan Exman of Durham, Conn., can conduct a partial foreclosure, allowing him to sell off nine "clean" parcels of the property and abandon the tenth — the mill — for someone

else to clean up.

The state Agency of Natural Resources and the town of Pownal have opposed Exman's partial foreclosure bid on public policy grounds.

Reactions of disappointment came from both. Assistant Attorney General John Hasen said he was "disappointed" with Meaker's ruling, and that the state would consider asking the court for permission to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court.

Pownal Select Board Chairman Frank Lamb also said he was disappointed. "The decision says he can go ahead and take the good and leave the bad, which is kind of sad." Lamb said he did not know what this decision meant for the town.

"We really don't know if this means the town of Pownal will be responsible for the clean-up of this remaining site."

In the 34-page ruling, Meaker wrote that "the court is persuaded that partial foreclosure is recognized in the law." Meaker added that the state Legislature "has no addressed the particular issue of partial foreclosure. Consequently,

the court cannot conclude that there is a violation of public policy. In addition, the court noted that there is nothing on the face of the note or the mortgage that is contrary to public policy."

Meaker also wrote that if the court reached the agency's conclusion that a partial foreclosure violated public policy, "the court would be creating a remedy which the hazardous waste statute...does not provide for."

The polluted parcel of the tannery

is being considered by the federal Environmental Protection Agency to be designated a Superfund site.

The town, meanwhile, is preparing a tax sale of the tannery to recover \$275,000 in delinquent taxes owed by the tannery's former owner, the Pownal Tanning Company, which went bankrupt in 1988.

According to court papers, Exman, whose company is called Pownal Development Corp., paid \$40,000 to First National Bank of Boston for the mortgage in 1995.

Exman foreclosed on and sold a 312-acre parcel located in New York to the New York Trust for Public Land, netting over \$40,000 in the sale and claiming a loss on his taxes of almost \$50,000 because he sold the property for less than its appraised value.

Although the tannery mill is assessed at \$125,000, it is contaminated with chromium, lead, pentachlorophenol and asbestos, records say. With the exception of the town of Pownal taking the title to the property through its tax lien, any party that takes ownership of the mill would be subject to a lawsuit by the EPA for cleanup costs under Superfund.

The town's attorney in the matter, Peter VanOot, said he would leave it to town officials to react to the ruling.

Lamb said the town was not involved in the proceedings. Any appeal would have to come from the state.

Leske

WASHINGTON BUREAU

GREENINGTON, VT  
10/11/90

WEDNESDAY

AUG 5 1990

NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY INC

### Editorial

# Superfund is the right choice for tannery

The Pownal Tannery site is being considered to be named a Superfund site by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. We encourage state and local officials to run, not walk, toward expediting this designation.

In the past, Vermont Gov. Howard Dean has resisted efforts to place the tannery on the Superfund list. He's done so because he believes that the Superfund process is long, slow, arduous and expensive -- and we believe he's exactly right on all counts.

But the Pownal Tannery operated for more than 40 years in the heart of Pownal, all before the polluting effects of its operation were clearly understood. For that matter, the location was textile mill prior to becoming a tannery operation -- there's no easy way to discover if any residual environmental damage remains from this earlier manufacturing operation, either. The tannery building itself, while sturdy enough, is currently unused and deteriorating.

If the site is ever to be placed

into use again, someone will have to determine what level of hazard exists and exactly what steps must be taken to remove the hazard. But here lies the rub. There will be a hefty cost to such an examination and cleanup, and the businesses that formerly operated on the tannery site are long defunct. The cost is also likely to exceed the amount of money the state and/or local officials are going to be willing to pony up. The property is in receivership -- meaning the financial institutions that hold the note have no liability here -- but they also have no way to interest anyone in investing in the site until it can pass an EPA inspection.

It seems pretty clear that the slow, expensive Superfund cleanup, however, undesirable, is the only possible method for restoring this bit of real estate to a state where it can become useful to commerce again. We thus encourage the governor and the Pownal Select board, when they meet today to discuss the issue, to agree to the EPA Superfund designation and to push for as quick a cleanup as possible.

*Please deliver to:  
Leslie McVicker*

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To	Sarah White	From	Tommy		
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Page	6-17-818-705				482-3413

# Neighbors oppose burying tannery waste

**TAMMY DANIELS**  
Staff Writer

**POWNAI** — Plans to bury contaminated materials from the Pownal Tanning Company in an existing landfill met with vigorous opposition from a couple whose property abuts the area.

The Nicholases, who own property on Dean Road where the landfill is located, told U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and state officials Thursday night they did not want the landfill disturbed. Officials were at the select board meeting to update and receive input on the proposed cleanup.

"Why do we have to open it back up?" said Deborah Nicholas. She was concerned that opening the already deteri-

orating portion of the landfill, cell three, would only cause more contamination, possibility effecting a nearby well on her property.

She also questioned the wisdom of moving contaminated material from its original site on Route 346 across the river to where the landfill is located. If it wasn't taken care of before, Nicholas wanted to know what guarantee was there it would be taken care of in the future.

The three landfill cells were created over a decade ago by the then-operating Pownal Tanning Company in an agreement with the state to contain toxic material waste produced through the plant's sheepskin-tanning operations.

*Please see TANNERY, Page 4A*

**TANNERY from Page 1A**  
The company went bankrupt and the third landfill cell was never completed properly. The bottom liner has deteriorated and the landfill itself was never maintained due to lack of funds at the state level.  
The EPA wants to reopen and refurbish the cell and repair the leachate collection system to contain contaminated soil and other materials from the demolition of the building.  
Shipping the material to an off-site location could be prohibitively expensive, said Rick Leighton, EPA project manager for the removal aspect of the project.

"There are problems with the present landfill," said Leighton. "But we have to try to remove a health risk in an economical way." Removal of the material from Pownal could cost up to \$1,500 a cubic yard depending on location. The landfill was a cheap and safe alternative, he said.  
There is a possibility that the material could be buried in the building's present footprint, said Leighton.  
The Nicholases were also concerned that the landfill would be left again to deteriorate after the project was completed. She noted the EPA had a five-year plan and wanted to know what

would happen after that.  
The state, explained Leighton, would be in charge of monitoring the landfill once the total project, including the lagoons, was completed and the EPA would reassess the site every five years.  
Nor would the project be left unfinished as it was before, he said, pointing out the \$7.7 million already released for the project. "It's important to understand that it's being done under statutory law passed to deal with these issues."

Since it involved the Superfund laws, "the governor and state have to belly up to the bar" and take over maintenance when it is completed, said Leighton.  
However, the Nicholases remain in opposition to using the tannery landfill. They also suggested posting a bulletin board at DJ's Country Store, near the complex, so residents of North Pownal could post their concerns on it. Board members thought it was a good idea and agreed to look into it.  
EPA officials plan to hold another public meeting on the project in mid-April. Pownal residents with any concern about the project are encouraged to call Sarah White, EPA community involvement coordinator, at 1-888-372-7341.

# Tannery neighbors don't want waste buried

RECEIVED TIMEMAR. 2. 1:08PM



# Environmental News

Contact: Alice Kaufman, EPA Community Affairs Office, (617) 918-1064

For immediate release: March 23, 1999

99-3-23

## EPA TAKES SWIFT ACTION ON POWNAL, VT, TANNERY CLEANUP

Boston-- Just two months after designating it a federal Superfund site, the United States Environmental Protection Agency approved today an \$8 million plan to cleanup a portion of the 28-acre Pownal Tannery Superfund site in North Pownal, Vermont. Funds for the cleanup come from the Superfund Trust Fund which is financed through an industry petrochemical tax.

The first phase of the cleanup, scheduled to begin this spring, includes decontamination and partial demolition of the tannery buildings, excavation of soils and contaminated sludges in the tannery building, disposal of materials in an on-site tannery landfill and final capping of the tannery landfill, located on Will Dean Road. The State of Vermont will be responsible for long-term operation and maintenance of the landfill cap once complete.

"We streamlined the Superfund process so that we are able to move far more quickly to address pollution at sites like Pownal," said John P. DeVillars, EPA's New England administrator. "We are readying for a spring construction season to begin work at the old tannery site and look ahead to the future reuse of this site."

With support from Governor Howard Dean, the Congressional Delegation and the town officials, EPA listed the tannery on the EPA's National Priorities list on January 11, 1999 thus making it eligible for cleanup under Superfund.

The delegation worked closely with the state, particularly the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation to secure federal funding for the Pownal Tannery site. Congressman Sanders, Sen. Leahy and Sen. Jeffords urged Secretary Carol Browner in a September 1998 letter to fund a cleanup of contamination at the site, stressing the importance of removing toxic substances from the site.

"This is good news and a sign of progress for Pownal," said Sen. Patrick Leahy. "The community has worked hard to address the issues at the tannery, and this is the result of the constructive partnership they have forged with EPA and other state agencies. The Vermont congressional

delegation will continue to support the community's efforts to finally begin the process."

more-

-2-

"I am very pleased to see that the EPA has moved so quickly following their listing of this site," said Sen. James Jeffords. "This is a great example of how the Superfund can work. With the cleanup about to begin, we can look forward to the redevelopment of this property to benefit the entire Pownal community."

"This is a very positive development for Pownal, the region, and the state," said Congressman Bernard Sanders. "Local communities need all the help we can give them to address environmental problems and we will continue to work as a delegation to help communities respond to environmental concerns. I am pleased that EPA's Region 1 office was able to work together successfully with state and local governments to address the need for a cleanup of this site."

"The work planned for this summer will be a significant step forward in addressing the risks that this site has presented to the community and the local environment since the tannery ceased operation." said John Kassell, Secretary for the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, "It also sets the stage for an additional benefit -- possible redevelopment of the property"

"Pownal is glad to see the start of this project and hopes to see the continuation of the entire cleanup completed in a timely manner." said Nelson Brownell, Pownal Selectboard Chairman.

The tannery cleanup team consists of EPA's Remediation Construction Manager, the Army Corps of Engineers and their construction contractors. In preparation for the cleanup activities, the team will establish a staging area near the site to hold construction equipment. Trailers will be moved to the site to serve as temporary field offices.

Throughout the cleanup, EPA will be working with the Army Corp of Engineers, the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, and in ongoing consultation with the Pownal Select Board.

In an effort to protect the health and safety of area residents and site workers EPA will: restrict access to the site by erecting a fence; monitor air quality; and wet contaminated soils to prevent dust from blowing. EPA and the construction team will make every effort to minimize the disturbance of the cleanup to the community.

The EPA will schedule a public information session in Pownal in mid-April to update the residents and address their concerns on the tannery work project. Rick Leighton, EPA Remediation

Construction Manager, will also be available during the cleanup to meet or talk with residents about their concerns during the removal.

Before work begins, the EPA will also set up an informational bulletin board for residents on the tannery cleanup at DJ's Country Store in North Pownal. Residents can also obtain additional information about the tannery cleanup through the information repository at the Pownal Public Library or by calling Rick Leighton or Sarah White at EPA's toll free number: 1-888-372-7341.

-30-

# Unusual tannery conditions pose worry for neighbors

\$8 million on the way, but immediate concerns surface

By Susan Pisano  
North Adams Transcript

POWNAI, Vt. — The Environmental Protection Agency approved \$8 million Tuesday to clean up the former Pownal tannery, with work expected to begin in the spring, but resident Deborah Nicholas said the plan to bury materials from the cleanup in the landfill off Dean Road is causing local worries.

Nicholas, who owns rental property near the landfill site, invited Selectwoman Laura Rosse and the press to the site to observe its lack of safety and security.

"As you can see, there are none," Nicholas said.

Gates at both entrances to the landfill, which has already been used as a waste disposal site for the tannery, were open and had no locks. There were no signs anywhere to indicate the property is a landfill, that hazardous material may be present there — not even a private property or no trespassing sign.

"There are absolutely no signs here to let people know this is a dangerous area," Nicholas said. "People have come here and shot deer, taken the meat home and fed it to their families, exposing them to who knows what."

Rosse said she would contact state authorities immediately and request locks and signs for the landfill. She made no comment but threw her boots away after leaving the property.

Two cement cylinders are visible, both with rotted wooden covers which are not attached to the cylinders, leaving them wide open. Both cylinders have ladders descending into them, and into a liquid substance contained



Deborah Nicholas has concerns about this tannery landfill site in Pownal across the Hoosic river from the tannery. An uncapped manhole that could prove dangerous to children who enter the landfill is not secured.

Photos by  
Gillian Jones  
North Adams Transcript

inside the uncovered receptacles.

"Can't you just picture some kid getting down there?" Nicholas asked. "We don't even know how deep it is, or what's inside."

The EPA said last November that signs would be erected posting the site as potentially hazardous. The Selectmen announced last week that the EPA had sent a letter saying informational meetings about the tannery cleanup would be held in April.

Sarah White, EPA community relations specialist, said this morning that some of the concerns are valid.

"There probably should be signs and locks on the landfill. I will bring it up to the project

managers today," she said. "We've made several efforts to meet with Mrs. Nicholas to address her concerns but she has not responded to us."

White acknowledged that EPA officials had said last fall that locks, and signs would be installed and gates locked. She said she did not know why that hadn't happened but added that EPA representatives would be happy to work with Nicholas.

Rick Leighton, project manager for the tannery clean-up, said when the EPA "mobilizes" to the site later this spring, locks and signs will be installed.

"When we did removal of barrels from the tannery in the mid-

See TANNERY, Page A7

# TANNERY

From AJ

1990s, we boarded up the mill and locked the gates, and I assume we did the landfill, too," he said. "But as fast as we can put locks and signs up, they come down."

"It is a losing battle unless you have someone actually on the premises," he said.

At the site, shotgun shell casings were found on the ground within the perimeters of the landfill. A path appeared to have been beaten down by foot and recreational vehicle traffic. In several areas of the landfill, a material resembling plastic is poking up through the ground, and Nicholas said she thinks it may be parts from the liners installed in the 1980s, when materials first

began to be stored there.

"This situation has never worked," Nicholas said.

An old electric meter is smashed on the ground, with wiring still attached. Nearby, a rusted metal cylinder with an open-ended elbow-style pipe and a black spout stand beside a pole with wires connected to it. There is a pool of what looks like water, nearly 20 feet long by 80 feet wide, with no fencing around it or a sign to indicate what may be contained in the water. The ground is saturated with water that Nicholas said may or may not be contaminated with the material buried underneath the ground.

"My dog has run over here and rolled around, jumped into the truck soaking wet, and we have no idea what he's been into," she said. "The neighbors with dogs and cats

have the same thing, and people are in here all the time. Why wouldn't they be? There is nothing here to keep them out, or warn them to stay out."

Along the outside of the landfill are at least two metal cylinders sticking up from the ground. The cylinders are wide enough for children to get their arms into but appear to have been made so they could be capped and locked. Neither cylinder has a top on it, and both are completely rusted.

Nicholas said that in an effort to avoid the appearance of liability, local, state, and federal officials have neglected the abutters of the landfill.

"In their desire to avoid liability, they have forgotten their responsibility to the people here," she said. "Now we know there is seepage

and who knows what, and I don't think it would have killed anybody to knock on my door and tell me to warn my tenants about the landfill."

"I don't want them to reopen this," she said. "Look at what hasn't been done here. No signs? No locks? How much does a lock cost?"

She said questions about the tannery and storage and disposal of tannery waste was discussed at a tannery conference in 1982, and she produced documentation of the conference.

"People in 1982 asked about the different things happening, what would be done and how would we know what happened," she said. "Now, we can look back and say, nothing was done, and we weren't able to know."

*Ms. 25, 1999, Manning*

# Few turn out for meeting on tannery problems

TAMMY DANIELS 5/20/99  
Staff Writer

**BENNINGTON** — Only a handful of people turned out last night for a meeting with U.S. health officials about contamination exposure from the former Pownal Tanning Co.

Officials from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, are developing a health assessment of the former tannery complex in North Pownal in conjunction with a Superfund cleanup of the site.

Agency regional representative Susanne Simon said she was a little disappointed by the low

turnout, but believed valid concerns and information had been raised by the few residents who attended and through contacts she had made in town. Select Board Chair Nelson Brownell and Health Officer James Gilbert said they thought people are simply relieved the tannery itself is finally being cleaned up.

Simon has been to the area numerous times over the last few months, introducing herself to residents. "It's good to be involved, good to be concerned," said Simon. Many times residents raise issues the agency is unaware of, she said, helping to create a more accurate assessment.

North Pownal resident Jerrold Lubeck, whose home lies near a tannery lagoon, was concerned about the long-term effects on the area's water and the dust that would be created during the demolition of the buildings, for instance.

The health assessment, which will take about a year to compile, will not be the last word on the issue, Simon assured him. With the cleanup of the lagoons still in the planning stage, the agency would continue to collect data and reevaluate its analysis on an ongoing basis, she said.

Meetings, such as last night's, allow residents to talk one-on-one to agency representatives about issues they may be reticent to bring up in an open meeting, she said. Information gleaned through discussing health issues goes both ways: To add to data being compiled on the area, and to educate people about possible health risks.

"A lot of calculating of exposure is determined by what we take in (information)," said Simon.

Education is a major part of the agency's work, said Community Involvement Specialist Maria Teran-Maclver. "It's our job to educate the community," she said, while working closely with local and state health officials.

The agency works only in an advisory capacity, said Teran-Maclver, and does not have the funds or legal authority to do cleanups or provide medical care. It does fund studies, maintain a registry of exposure to hazardous sites, educate communities and health professionals on exposure, and provides technical support to other agencies.

The agency was created as part of the Environmental Protection Act and advises the EPA on hazardous waste sites. The agency also provides assessments, studies and educational programs to communities and responds to citizen concerns about other areas, she explained.

"It's our job to make sure communities know what we're doing and give people a chance to air their concerns," said Teran-Maclver.

The health assessment will include data collected by the agency, the EPA and various local, state and federal health information. A rough draft will be available for public comment prior to a final draft, said Simon.

Residents who have questions or concerns about possible exposure are encouraged to get in touch with Simon or MacIver. MacIver can be reached by calling toll-free 1-888-422-8737. Simon can be reached at 1-617-918-1492. The agency website is [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/) <<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/>>

**"It's our job to make sure communities know what we're doing and give people a chance to air their concerns."**

**MARIA TERAN-MACTVER**  
*Community Involvement Specialist*



seeks of NATO airstrikes. Even though the draft appeared to signal a victory for NATO, President Clinton and other U.S. officials reacted cautiously, waiting for signs that Milosevic would begin pulling his troops out and allow the return of more than 855,000 refugees. In the meantime, NATO's bombing campaign continued, with airstrikes reported in Kosovo and elsewhere Tuesday night. Though cloaked in language meant to

action would continue until it was clear the plan was being implemented. "We must be cautious ... until Serb forces begin a verifiable withdrawal from Kosovo," he said. NATO jets roared over Belgrade even as Russian and European envoys wrapped up talks with Yugoslav leaders. "Yugoslavia accepts the document for peace brought by the highest representatives of the European Union and Russia," the official Tanjug news agency said following talks between Milosevic,

State Department spokesman

keeping force; • the safe and fr Albanian refugees past months • substantial aut- The draft would sevic weaker than sentatives rejected February and Mar Then, talk was security forces' r But the latest pe Yugoslav forces tr

## Pownal may receive EPA study grant

OMMY DANIELS Staff Writer

**POWNAL** — Pownal may be one of the first towns in line for a new grant initiative from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Recycling Initiative Grant, which has not been officially announced yet, will give towns up to \$100,000 to fund feasibility studies for potential reuse of Superfund sites.

"Our priority has been clean-ups," Leslie McVickers, EPA remedial project manager at the Pownal Tanning Company, told the select Board Thursday night. "Now we're trying to move forward and maximize our administrative authority and jump-start these things."

A lot of the problem with "recycling" contaminated sites is the stigma attached to them. "No public or private entity wanted to deal with these sites," said McVickers because of contamination and liability concerns. The EPA is hoping the new program being piloted will help towns and property owners put the cleaned sites to productive use, she said.

The tannery met all the criteria for the new grant and McVickers volunteered it for the pilot program. Only one or two sites on each of the 10 EPA regions are being put forward for consideration, she said.

In addition to funding, the EPA will also facilitate peer assistance from other municipalities that have found ways to reuse once abandoned land, or aid with technical assistance from experts in the field, she said.

The town could look at multi-use proposals for the entire site, or concentrate on a particular parcel, such as the lagoons, within the complex, said McVickers. The area could be used for ballfields, tennis courts, an industrial park or municipal buildings, she suggested.

The EPA would require institutional control to ensure the area, once cleaned and approved, would not be reopened, she said. "You couldn't put in a building with a deep cellar ... or put in wells," she explained.

The sticking point may be the ownership

Please see EPA, page 4



### THEY NEED A FEW GOOD MEN

Chief Warrant Officer Stan Grover, an Arlington native, came from Missouri to work on the Bennington Community Park in his own former "backyard." The Park, following its second day of construction, faces a crisis. The needed volunteers have still not come out and construction officials say if enough people do not come out by today, parts of the park may be cut although the funds to pay for them are in place. For more, see stories on page 8 and 9.

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# EPA team cleans up in Pownal

JAMES THERRIEN

BANNER STAFF WRITER

**POWNAI** - An emergency waste removal team from the federal Environmental Protection Agency has set up shop at the former Pownal Tanning Co. site and will perform testing and remove hazardous materials from the closed factory.

Team supervisor Lisa Danek said a waste testing and removal firm hired by the EPA will be at the site for one to two months, removing barrels of potentially hazardous material and testing for the presence of asbestos, PCBs and other materials.

Funding for the work will come from federal Superfund allocations, Danek said. The project has an estimated budget of \$250,000 to cover the site work, on-site and laboratory testing, removal and disposal of hazardous materials, and related work.

She said the federal government might later seek reimbursement for the work from parties determined to be responsible for the hazardous waste, such as principals in the bankrupt tannery business.

Danek said funding for the current project will not come from \$370,000 the State of Vermont was awarded in a court settlement announced in January, stemming from a suit the state Attorney General's office brought against tannery officers over waste cleanup costs. That money is earmarked for future testing of tannery dumping lagoons and a nearby landfill, well water testing and cleanup work relating to any river, groundwater or similar contamination that might be found.

Work on determining the extent of such environmental damage and how it should be dealt with is slated to begin in earnest this year, under the direction of another EPA office. That work will lead to a determination of whether the North Pownal site should be placed on a national waste cleanup priority list.

Danek said her team focuses instead on immediate cleanup problems found at a waste site.



James Therrien

**Lisa Danek is supervising an EPA emergency waste removal team at the former Pownal Tanning Co. site. The team will be testing for and removing hazardous materials from the site.**

such as removal of barrels of hazardous materials. As an example, she said the contractor, OHM Corporation Environmental Services of Hopkinton, Mass., will test any materials found in the vacant factory in a special equipment trailer that has been set up next to an office trailer at the site.

Further testing of the materials will also be performed at laboratories, Danek said, and a determination will be made on how to dispose of the wastes and where. The wastes in the several barrels, which appear to be related to the tanning process, will eventually be sent to a hazardous waste landfill, she said.

The equipment trailer contains protection gear, respirators, showers for use after crew members work with the wastes and similar features. The EPA also may rent other equipment as needed, the supervisor said, and might hire local contractors for certain work.

In addition to waste in barrels and other containers, the crew will test and dispose of what

appears to be loose asbestos in piles in the plant, Danek said. Thirteen turbines at the plant's electricity generation facility will be tested for the presence of PCBs, once used as in lubricants but now banned as a carcinogen.

The facility is at the mill dam near the south end of the rambling brick and concrete block structure, which began as a textile mill and was converted to a tannery some three decades ago. Wastes at the property, which is on the bank of the Hoosac River, are associated with tanning process.

The half-dozen members of the EPA crew also will investigate whether a hazard exists at the five lagoon areas, where there is evidence of trespassing, Danek said. A determination will be made on whether to fence off the three currently unfenced lagoons.

Danek said the EPA emergency response team was requested after the federal agency was notified of the presence of the barrels and other materials by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

*Loshie*

## **Pownal to receive \$100,000 for tannery site evaluation**

Saturday July 24, 1999

**By Erik Arvidson**

Berkshire Eagle Staff

POWNAL, Vt. -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced yesterday that the town will receive up to \$100,000 to plan for the redevelopment of the contaminated former Pownal Tanning Co. site off Route 346.

The funds will pay for an assessment by the town of possible reuse plans for the 28-acre tannery site, which is listed on the EPA's National Priorities List of Superfund waste sites, officials said.

The announcement comes as EPA engineers have started removing asbestos and decontaminating the tannery mill complex in preparation for having the structures demolished later this summer.

Pownal is one of 10 communities in the country receiving planning assistance grants totaling \$1 million under the Superfund program, agency officials said.

"The \$97,000 we applied for will help us plan for this community's future, and will help facilitate redevelopment of the site, which will bring tax dollars back into this town," said Selectmen Chairman Nelson Brownell.

Meanwhile, the \$8 million initial cleanup phase of the tannery site has been under way for several weeks, and officials expect demolition work to begin the second week of August, according to Richard T. Leighton, EPA's remediation construction manager.

Workers are stripping roofing material containing asbestos, as well as parts of a boiler and pipes, also containing asbestos, Leighton said.

Contaminated material in the floors and on fixtures in the northern portion of the mill complex is also being removed, Leighton said.

Workers wearing protective suits are also overpacking between 50 and 60 55-gallon drums, the majority being empty but some containing an unknown material that is potentially hazardous, Leighton said.

Fluorescent lights containing mercury vapors, which may also contain polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, are also being removed, according to Leighton.

"The whole idea is to essentially allow us when we take the building down to take the material off as construction debris to a landfill," Leighton said.

According to Leighton, concerns about the historic value of the old mill prompted the EPA to sign a memorandum of agreement with the Vermont Historic Preservation Commission.

"The National Historic Preservation Act implies that if you take an adverse action on something eligible for the historic register, you have to take steps to mitigate that adverse action," Leighton said.

The EPA has agreed to hire a historic preservation consultant to photodocument both the interior and exterior of the mill before it is demolished. "The consultant will evaluate the mill's activities in the complex and related activities and put it in the context of other activities in the state of Vermont. Not just the building, but the building in its proper context with the community," Leighton said.

Concurrent with the demolition, the on-site landfill, which contains contaminated sludge and soil, will be studied for an eventual capping later this year, Leighton said.

The cap, which the tanning company installed before it went bankrupt a decade ago, is unfinished, allowing rainwater to seep through the contaminants in the landfill and into the ground below. As part of the long-term remediation of the site, the groundwater and the heavily contaminated lagoon system near the mill will be studied, Leighton said.

The lagoon system, where wastes were dump to allow solids to settle, is expected to be the target of a subsequent cleanup effort.



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GARDNER NEWS

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JUL 26 1999

NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY, INC

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## Vermont tannery receives grant

POWNAI, Vt. (AP) — Pownal has received \$100,000 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to study new uses for a contaminated tannery site.

Now town officials will study ways to reclaim the 28-acre Pownal Tanning Co., which was added to the EPA's Superfund list earlier this year.

EPA officials said Pownal is the first town in New England to receive one of the EPA's planning grants, which are designed to help areas find new uses for Superfund sites.

"It's a really exciting time to be on the select board of Pownal, especially with all the positive work going on at the tannery," said select board member Laura Rosse. "We're really thankful to be part of the EPA's pilot program."

The Pownal Tannery was added to the EPA's list of National Priorities, better known as the Superfund list, on Jan. 11.

From 1937 to its closure in 1988, the tannery specialized in chrome tanning of sheepskins. Waste products, including toxic metals and dioxins, were discharged into open lagoons near the building and the nearby Hoosick River. The company declared bankruptcy and closed down in 1988.

The 19th-century mill and its hydroelectric plant have sat idle since then.

In March, the EPA approved an \$8 million plan to clean the tannery's grounds, decontaminating some buildings and demolishing others. Contaminated soils and sludge under the building will be excavated and disposed of in a landfill at the tannery.

Town officials in Pownal don't yet have plans for the site, though they have discussed the possibility of using it as a river recreational area or a light industry zone.

"We are very happy to be one of EPA's pilot communities," said Pownal Select Board Chairman Nelson Brownell. "The \$97,000 we applied for will help us plan for this community's future, and will help facilitate redevelopment of the site which will bring tax dollars back into this town."

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NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY, INC.

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**Pownal Receives Environmental Grant**

**EPA**  
**BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

POWNAL, Vt. — Pownal has received \$100,000 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to study new uses for a contaminated tannery site.

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ATTN: SARAH WHITE

## Tannery to get \$100,000 grant

First EPA funding of its kind in N.E.

**TAMMY DANIELS**  
Staff Writer

**POWNAL** - Pownal became the first town in New England to receive a \$100,000 planning grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Friday.

The money will help the town turn the contaminated 28-acre Pownal Tanning Co. site into something productive.

The long-idle tannery was named a Superfund site in January and was nominated for the new grant last month. The EPA's Superfund Redevelopment Initiative is designed to aid areas in finding new uses for Superfund sites.

No firm plans have been made for the North Pownal tannery site, though its use as a river recreational area or a light industry zone has been discussed.

The old tannery met all the criteria for the federal initiative, said Leslie McVickers, EPA project manager for the tannery clean-up. Only one or two sites in each of the 10 EPA regions were nominated for the pilot program, she said.

"We are very happy to be one of EPA's pilot communities," said Pownal Select Board Chairman Nelson Brownell. "The \$97,000 we applied for will help us plan for this community's future, and will help facilitate rede-

Please see **TANNERY**, Page 4A

## Pownal is first in N.E. to get new EPA grant

**TANNERY**, from Page 1A

velopment of the site which will bring tax dollars back into this town.

"It's a really exciting time to be on the select board of Pownal, especially with all the positive work going on at the tannery," said Pownal Select Board member Laura Rosse. "We're really thankful to be part of the EPA's pilot program."

The main tannery complex is presently undergoing an estimated \$5 million first-phase clean-up by the EPA. A second phase will

work on a solution to the polluted lagoons and areas surrounding the complex.

EPA Administrator Carol Browner announced the first 10 recipients of the nearly \$1 million in redevelopment grants at the Avera Superfund Site in Virginia. Another 50 pilot grants are expected to be awarded by the end of next year, to the tune of \$5 million.

"Through this initiative, we will work cooperatively with local governments and businesses to clean up old toxic waste sites and transform them into

new parks, neighborhoods or thriving commercial districts," said Browner.

The new initiative marks a policy change in the mission of the EPA. Based on a similar model called the Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative, the EPA will now help communities plan for future uses of former polluted sites.

"It's how to be smarter about what we're doing. Instead of just limiting future use, we're finding out how communities want to use sites," said Alice Kaufman, EPA spokesman.

The agency primarily cleans up polluted sites and plans for long-term inspections, she said. Now, the EPA will be able work with communities to leave the sites in a way that will assist in redevelopment, said Kaufman.

The EPA has awarded 49 Brownfields grants in New England to aid in redevelopment. One grant is helping turn an industrial site in Woburn, Mass., into a regional transportation center and another helped with plans for a mega-mall at a Superfund site in Connecticut.

JUL 28 1999

NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY, INC.

A-2

By Michael J. Card

PAGE ONE

Trucks and tractors lead the bustle of activity at the former Pownal Tannery in North Pownal, Vt., part of an effort to complete the first phase of an \$8 million Superfund project that will decontaminate the area of toxic materials, before razing the buildings on the site.

And last Friday prospects got even better at the Superfund site, when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) listed Pownal as one of 10 Superfund sites nationwide that will receive \$100,000 in planning assistance funds to study potential reuse opportunities for the site.

Leslie McVickar, at the EPA office in Boston, says the redevelopment investigation, funded through a new program called the Superfund Redevelopment Initiative, will begin this fall with the hiring of a consultant, so that much of the input should come from local residents, as the Boston-based agency would only make "a generic recommenda-

tion" about what would be best for North Pownal.

In a recent press release, Pownal Select Board Chairman Nelson Brownell said of the redevelopment project, "It's exciting to be involved with this pilot program. We have made good progress with reuse of gasoline-contaminated sites here in Vermont, but former manufacturing facilities like the Pownal Tannery have proved to be a bigger challenge. Successful reuse of the tannery will provide an excellent model for future projects, both in Vermont and nationwide."

Other changes have occurred since the cleanup plan was released and approved this past March. Originally, it was thought that only the northern building was to be demolished, but McVickar said yesterday they found that all buildings are considered structurally sound, and will be torn down as well.

Rick Leighton, EPA's remediation con-

# EPA begins cleanup at tannery

## Federal monies obtained for redevelopment of Pownal site

struction manager, who has been on the site for the past week coordinating the cleanup, confirmed that the three main buildings — the north, central and block buildings — will be demolished this fall, but two smaller buildings adjacent to the property, the screen building and the lagoon building, will be demolished if money is available. If not done this year, Leighton says they are still on the list of priorities in the project.

Another part of the project that got moved back into a less serious category — therefore to be delayed until a later phase of the project — is the removal of sludges in the nearby lagoon area, which was used as a leachate for the former tannery's wastewater.

The project has been in the planning phase for years, and Leighton said the people of Pownal have been "very patient in waiting to get this eyesore off their map."

The tannery, which was used from 1937 to 1988 as a tanning operation for cowhide and sheephide, before 1962 disposed of all its wastewater directly into the Hoosic River, which runs along the south side of the building. In 1962, the tannery began to process its wastewater by disposing it in a series of settling lagoons, where the water would presumably separate from hazardous materials before trickling back into the river. The contaminated sludge that resulted from this process was eventually disposed of in an on-site landfill, which was constructed in 1982.

After 1988, when the tannery owners filed bankruptcy, the buildings sat unused. By 1993, the EPA had visited the site and completed a Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation and approved a Time-Critical Removal Action, which allowed it to remove some 13,000 pounds of contaminated sludge from the lagoon system.

By 1995, the EPA had gone through and collected samples of groundwater, soil, sediment surface water and leachate samples. It found dangerously high concentrations of several metals, dioxins and semi-volatile compounds. These include arsenic (over 40 times the legal amount in parts per million), lead (1.2 times as much), benzopyrene (180 times), benzo(b)fluoranthene (25 times), dioxins (1.2 times), and benzo(k)anthracene (25 times), to name a few.

At this point, most of the materials that could be disposed of easily have been removed. "The work's been going on here for several months already. We're near the end of the prelimi-

CONT'D

34

# Pownal Board not quite prime time

TAMMY DANIELS

Staff Writer <sup>EPA</sup>

Leslie -  
R4E

POWNAI.— Pownal residents will finally get a chance to see their elected officials in action. But only those who know how to set their VCRs — or those with insomnia — can catch the broadcast.

That's because last Thursday night's meeting of the Select Board will be shown at 3 a.m. Tuesday morning.

Not exactly prime time. But viewership should improve once the new show goes live and gets a better slot, along with established hits like the Bennington and Shaftsbury Select Board meetings.

For at least the next month, though, the taped board meetings will be trapped in the late-night netherworld of infomercials and psychics.

Select Board members decided to fast track the CAT-TV broadcasts after voters overwhelmingly approved a ballot article to broadcast the meetings — and the funds to do it — at March Town Meeting. The article gave the board until May 4.

Adelphia Cable will hook up the town offices to allow live broadcasts in the near future.

Several Select Board members said they were a little leery of appearing on camera.

But any self-consciousness disappeared quickly Thursday night as board members got down to business, ignoring the camera and microphones set up along the long table they use. Select Board Chairman Nelson Brownell did admit to a haircut before the first broadcast, though.

So, for those who still have that blinking "12:00" on their VCRs, the Select Board approved a bid of \$8,000 to complete shell construction of a town garage and made appointments to town offices.

Bill Hayes was reappointed forest warden, and Dave Thomas and Anson Mason were reappointed to the Zoning Board. Former Select Board member Henry Strohmaier was named to the Planning Commission. Maude Dickinson and Judy Greenawalt were named town health agents; Dorothy Kimball, E-911 coordinator; Casey Mattison, Nelson Brownell and Alan Strobridge, fence viewers; Sheri Carter, JoAnne Miller and Tina Duval, town recreation board; Craig Odell, emergency management coordinator; Joel Burrington Sr., sign administrator; Amy Moore and Stefan Strohmaier, Bennington County Regional Commission representatives; and David Dence Sr., inspector of shingles.

Nine residents were named to the reuse assessment steering committee — Justin Taylor, Linda Leonard, Linda and Jay Sciarra, Jon Peaslee, Don Prouty, Gerry Lubeck, Alan Strobridge and Cindy Brownell — to plan a new use for the former Pownal Tanning Co. property.

The Environmental Protection Agency awarded the town a \$100,000 grant as part of a pilot program to aid municipalities in developing former Superfund sites. The EPA is entering the second phase of the estimated \$20 million clean-up of the polluted North Pownal area.

52-

# Pownal reviews conceptual wastewater system plans

TAMMY DANIELS  
Staff Writer EPA

**POWNAL** — Town officials were given the conceptual plans last week for a state of the art wastewater system in North Pownal.

The treatment facility for the estimated \$13 million system would include some of the newest technologies and will be built to allow expansion, said Don Phillips, a consulting engineer with Forcier and Aldrich Associates, the company planning the town system.

"I feel really good about the location and the size," he said. "This site will last the town of Pownal 100 years."

The proposed location for the plant is where the former Pownal Tanning Company's lagoons now exist, between Route 346 and the Hoosic River. It would be situated by a bend in the river, freeing up more acreage at the site for other uses, said Phillips.

The lagoons, used to leach and contain toxic materials used by the defunct tannery, will be part of the Superfund clean-up of the site. The Environmental Protection Agency tore down and trucked away the tannery building in North Pownal last year.

The EPA is presently doing tests at the lagoons in preparation for that phase of the clean-up.

A sewer committee, made up of town residents, chose the site to dovetail with the EPA's ongoing operations and the work of a tannery reuse assessment committee that's funded by an EPA grant. The sewer committee's work, and planning by Forcier

and Aldrich, is funded by a \$150,000 bond voters passed last year.

Nearly 90 percent of the funding for the system should come from state and federal grants, said Select Board Chairman Nelson Brownell. Town officials plan to aggressively pursue other funding options as well, said Brownell. "We're trying to come as close as possible to the actual cost."

It would be up to voters to approve a final plan and cost for the proposed wastewater system.

The central facility will handle wastewater from the densely populated areas of the town: north, south and central Pownal.

The town is presently under orders by Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources to stop the flow of raw sewage into the Hoosic River in North Pownal. Individual septic systems in several areas of the town have been failing as well.

The central facility for the system would include offices, storage, and waste treatment areas. It would also take advantage of new forms of composting, turning solid wastes into "clean" mulch for landscaping use. Liquid

waste, once it's been filtered of phosphates and bacteria, will discharge into the Hoosic River.

To get a better grasp of the conceptual plans, town officials are planning a day-long tour of some of the newer and refurbished wastewater facilities in the state, including Wilmington and Plainfield.

The bus tour is planned for Saturday, June 24. Any town resident wishing to join the Select Board and committee members on the tour should contact Linda Sciarappa at the town office weekdays after 12:30 p.m. Enough space is available for a limited number of citizens. Preference will be given to North Pownal residents.

Leslie

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JUN 22 2000

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3 BF

# Tannery clean-up <sup>EPA</sup> nears completion

**TAMMY DANIELS**  
*Staff Writer*

**NORTH POWNAL** - The Superfund clean-up of the Pownal Tanning Co. complex is almost complete.

The building, a polluted eyesore for many years, was torn down last year by the Environmental Protection Agency. Parts of the facility were trucked away and other detritus from the demolition sealed into the refurbished tannery landfill across the river.

"We're not leaving it in a park condition, but as close as possible," said EPA Project Manager Leslie McVickars. "We are leaving it in a clean condition."

The narrow footprint of the former building lies between Route 346 and the Hoosic River. A grassy slope will extend from the old set of railroad tracks on the property down to the river and an access road will be built into the site. The tracks will be left in place, said McVickars.

The site will be loamed and seeded with grass this fall.

A handrail of pipe and wood will be installed for safety along the water.

To the south, a deteriorating concrete wall will be replaced by a stony slope. The present chain link fence separating the property from the still-used Guilford railroad tracks will be removed from the northern end of the property. At the south end of the site, the fence will be left

in place because of steep drop to the tracks below.

Samples are still being taken around the area, including behind the dam at the south end of the property. The results are expected in July.

The tannery warehouse on Route 346, which is still being used, may have "hot spots" that will have to be dealt with, said McVickars. Hides were stored under the building at some point and that could have caused contamination, she said.

The hydroelectric plant and the dam over the river will stay. The plant is part of a .6 acre parcel owned outright by Connecticut businessman Jan Exman, who also holds the mortgage on the tannery property.

The plant is in poor condition and hasn't operated in years, said McVickars. But the agency is not planning on dealing with either the plant or the dam, she said.

A marker documenting the history of the tannery, including its role in the changing of child labor laws in the United States, will be installed as part of a deal struck with Vermont Historical Society. The tannery was considered an important historical building, but its condition precluded attempts at preservation.

Instead, the building was thoroughly documented inside and out by the state and the EPA so its part in the history of the state won't be forgotten.

30

# Pownal officials and EPA wrestle with cleanup of con- taminated tannery lagoons

Sammy Daniels  
Bennington Banner

**NORTH POWNAL, Vt.** — The site is a lush wilderness: Birds weep through the trees, bullfrogs yell forth from ponds thick with cattails. To the west runs the fast-flowing Hoosic River.

A visitor might believe the area is untouched wetlands, or even a wildlife preserve. But a locked gate discourages entry and signs warn the casual walker away.

Underneath the ponds lurks a stew of chemicals and heavy metals, waste from the defunct Pownal Tanning Company.

"There's chromium and insecticides, like DDT —," said Leslie McVickers, waving her hand toward a small lagoon last week.

McVickers, project manager for the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund cleanup of the site, led a citizen's committee researching the reuse of the site and engineers for the project on a walking tour of the area.

There's a roster of contaminants in the multiple lagoons that lie between the railway and the river, just north of the now-demolished tannery complex.

"It's primarily heavy metals and low levels of dioxin," said McVickers.

The good news is that there appears to be a layer of clay under the sludge in several lagoons. The clay would minimize seepage into the ground underneath, and make removal of the sludge easier, she said.

Private wells in the area haven't shown any evidence of contamination, said McVickers.

The lagoons were created in the 1970s to contain the chemical waste sludge from the tanning of hides. But that early attempt in environmental conservatism created its own host of problems.

The detritus of an old pump-house in the back of one lagoon is a chilling reminder of the poorly thought-out solution to the com-

pany's compliance with newly passed regulations of the period.

When water in the lagoon reached a certain level, it was simply pumped straight into the nearby river, said McVickers.

The EPA is presently studying the site in preparation of work on the lagoons, the next phase in the Superfund cleanup of the tannery.

How the EPA deals with the lagoons will partly depend on what the town wants to do with the site.

The federal agency is working closely with a re-use assessment steering committee, made up of citizens and Pownal select board members. The town received a grant through the EPA, one of the first of its kind in the nation, to aide in utilizing the scenic, but polluted, acres.

That project, in turn, is tied into another town initiative — the construction of a wastewater treatment plant to eliminate waste from North Pownal now flowing into the river and ease the strain on failing septic systems in the densest areas of the town.

The tannery lagoons are the optimum site for the treatment plant, leaving plenty of room for other uses, such as recreational areas or a combination of recreation and commercial uses, say town leaders.

But in creating the toxic ponds, the tannery also created a wetland that now has to be protected, said McVickers. That means if one or more of the lagoons is eliminated, it will have to be recreated elsewhere.

A preliminary survey shows a number of residents are interested in trails by the river and possibly a boat launch, said Alison Church, an engineer with Greenman-Pederson Inc. of Albany, N.Y. and planner for

the reuse committee.

"They want to keep it low key."

Others have expressed interest in open fields for athletics, pointed out Don Prouty, a member of the committee.

Church said there could be some flexibility in dealing with the wetlands, depending on what the state deems necessary.

That means by the end of the year, state and federal agencies and the town will have to try to combine different needs — a wastewater facility, wetlands protection, environmental restoration and community desires — into a unified vision.

The final result could be several years away, warned McVickers. But, she said, "there's a lot we can do to get it (the lagoons) into a positive condition where you can do what you need to. We want to hear from you."

The reuse assessment committee also wants plenty of input from town residents.

A public meeting to discuss possible uses of the lagoon area is scheduled for July 12 at 7 p.m. at the North Pownal fire house. Representatives from the EPA will be on hand as well.

**BENNINGTON BANNER**

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THURSDAY  
JUL 13 2000

NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP PAGE

# Recreational uses top the list on survey for Pownal Tannery

EPA

**TAMMY DANIELS**  
Staff Writer

**BENNINGTON** — Recreational facilities are at the top of the list of possible uses of the former Pownal Tanning Co. site, according to a preliminary survey by the town's reuse assessment steering committee.

Alison Church, planner for the project and engineer with Greenman-Pederson Inc., explained the results to more than 30 townspeople at a public hearing Wednesday night.

Nearly 1,000 surveys listing possible uses for the tannery were sent out through the elementary and middle school, mailed or picked up at DJ's Country Store.

Fewer than 200 people responded to the survey, some through telephone interviews. A little more than 100 surveys came back out of 900 passed through the schools. The surveys weren't ready until the last week of school, and that probably accounted for the poor response, said Church.

But those residents who did respond put boating, canoeing, fishing and walking areas as their top choices for the tannery. That was followed closely by trails for skiing and biking, picnic areas and lawn games, and an ice skating rink.

Of the 78 adults who completed the surveys, lawn and picnicking areas came out on top, said Church. The town's children opted for the higher-activity options, including the ice rink.

Other options on the list included municipal services, including the planned wastewater plant, commercial, industrial,

**Adults who completed the surveys opted lawn and picnicking areas came out on top, said Church. The town's children opted for the higher-activity options, including the ice rink.**

educational and housing possibilities.

The tannery, including the lagoons, wetlands created by the company to contain run off from the tanning process, is now undergoing a Superfund clean-up under the direction of the Environmental Protection Agency. The wetlands could be a sticking point for any reuse project, and the town and state are in ongoing discussions about their future, said Church.

The agency gave the town a \$100,000 grant this year to explore reuse options at the site, part of a new program to encourage putting Superfund areas back into community use.

The EPA will bring the site back up to the present standards in North Pownal, which is mostly zoned residential, but a lot depends "on which direction the town wants to move forward," said Leslie McVickar, EPA project manager.

Right now, the town doesn't have a lot of specific locations zoned for industrial use, explained Select Board Chairman Nelson Brownell. Instead, a conditional use permit is used, giving the community more leeway in deciding how to use the area and more voice in how to use it, he said.

"If you go through conditional use, people can come in to hear-

ings and restrictions can be put in," he said.

The wastewater treatment plant, while not getting a lot of votes on the survey, is still being planned with the tannery in mind.

The state of the art facility would use minimal space and shouldn't interfere with recreational uses.

A tour of similar plants in Vermont turned up several towns that put recreation and wastewater facilities side by side, including Montpelier, said Brownell.

"I think it was very informative," said Pownalite Penelope Fehr of the meeting. "But the consultants didn't get as much input as they wanted."

One woman complained that the committee hadn't done enough to reach more people in the town, especially those with no children in the schools.

Church and Russell Ryan, an engineer with Forcier Aldrich and Associates, said the survey was just preliminary and more extensive outreach in the town would be done.

"We need that input, we really do, to make the right decisions," said Brownell.

The meeting will be broadcast tonight on CAT-TV at 7:30 p.m.

Two more public meetings, including one on Aug. 30, will be held before a final decision on the site is made.

39

# Lead is found at Fisherville

## Setback for mill cleanup

By Dan De Leo  
TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

**GRAFTON** — In a minor setback at the Fisherville Mill site, officials have now found lead contamination there and must await testing before continuing the cleanup.

According to David J. Dunham, the executive director of the Central Massachusetts Economic Development Authority, the agency that owns the site, Environmental Protection Agency officials detected the lead in the ash there about a week ago.

"It's not screaming high levels of lead, but it's there," said Mr. Dunham.

The Aug. 3 fire reduced the old textile mill to a jumble of bricks and tangle of metal and granite. Crews working for the state Department of Environmental Protection and EPA have been on the site performing the initial stage of the cleanup.

While testing material at the site, EPA officials discovered a minimal concentration of lead within the ash, Mr. Dunham said, about 5.75 parts per million. The state's acceptable standard is 5.0 parts per million, he said. The lead is likely the remnant of lead paint used at the mill.

### EXCEEDED LIMIT

EPA officials are continuing to test the ash, he said, because one pile was found to contain an acceptable concentration of lead, while another exceeded that limit. Therefore it is not clear yet whether a lead cleanup will be needed.

If so, however, removal of the lead will neither be costly nor complicated, Mr. Dunham said.

"It shouldn't make a significant difference," he said.

The lead contaminants can be disposed of in one of two ways, he said. The material can be treated with a cement slurry, which removes the leaching characteristics of the lead, and then hauled away at about \$60 to \$70 per ton. Or it can be removed

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**'This is an obligation  
that needs to be  
carried forward.'**

DAVID J. DUNHAM  
CMEDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

at about twice that cost per ton without any treatment, he said.

He said it is not clear how many tons of lead-contaminated material there are, but that it is "not a large quantity."

The discovery is a small setback following the successful first phase of the cleanup. The EPA has finished removing asbestos-contaminated material from one corner of the site. The front portion of the site now appears mostly clear, with one large pile of rusted metal that will likely be sold as scrap, Mr. Dunham said.

### FINANCIAL CHALLENGE

The DEP takes over the next phase, which will entail devising a plan to treat the ground, which is contaminated with trichloroethylene, an organic pollutant.

The task at hand is to determine the extent of the plume of that pollution, Mr. Dunham said.

Though the cleanup has been moving along smoothly, CMEDA faces some uncertainty. The agency, which has been overseeing the cleanup, is nearly out of funding, Mr. Dunham said. CMEDA has previously operated on funds generated from project revenue and grants, but is now seeking state funding to continue operation, Mr. Dunham said. There are two bills under consideration in the Legislature that would create funding for the organization, he said.

"We're in a transition stage, but we're trying to find ways to keep work going on at the site," he said. "This is an obligation that needs to be carried forward."

## ADVOCATE - NORTH

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NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP AGENCY, INC.

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AB



MICHAEL J. CARD

*Excavators from Maxymillian contractors clean up the Pownal Tannery building last fall as part of the Superfund project. With the buildings razed, the town must consider how to best use the property, which is located in the center of North Pownal, Vt. along Route 346.*

### **Pownal looking to potential uses for the former Tannery site**

**By Michael J. Card**

With the major cleanup efforts completed at the site of the former Pownal Tannery in North Pownal, Vt., EPA and town officials are looking forward to potential uses for the site. They held a meeting last week to get input from citizens about what uses they would like to see for the recuperating site.

The Pownal Tannery stood on the northeast bank of the Hoosic River. The site includes a lagoon area, a dam once used for hydroelectric power, easy access to Boston & Maine Railway tracks and a level area where the buildings once stood.

Select board members have already been eyeing the property to establish a wastewater treatment center for parts of the town. At a recent tour, they found new treatment facility technology that eliminates space and smell, which could mean the site would be able to support a multiple use.

The town received a \$100,000 grant under a new EPA program to investigate potential uses for the site.

At the meeting, the overwhelming response was to clean up the property and use it for recreational use, including a canoe launch or picnic areas. Citizens would like an area for public use, although some expressed interest in finding business or industry to locate there.

The initial phase of the cleanup project ended this spring; the EPA will continue to monitor the site and may have to address hazardous materials trapped in the lagoon area.

39

# Pownal Tannery Superfund site undergoes another review

ERIC VOHR  
Staff Writer

POWNAL — An independent government agency has submitted its designation of the Pownal Tannery Superfund site as a public health hazard.

The U.S. Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry determined there's a distinct "physical danger presented by the dam area adjacent to the Hoosic River."

"We are going to recommend a fence be constructed around the old dam and around some of the other hazardous workings of the old tannery," said Robert Knowles, environmental health

scientist with the agency.

Knowles said they also recommend extensive soil samples and surface water samples in the Hoosic River to insure that the toxic chemicals that were used in the tannery process do not pose a health hazard to Pownal residents.

The Pownal tannery was shut down in July 1987 after a lengthy attempt to comply with environmental standards.

The site was designated a Superfund clean-up area and the building was torn down and removed last year as part of the first phase of the EPA Superfund program according to agency spokesman John Florence. A

leaking landfill that was being used by the tannery to dump waste was also cleaned up as part of this first phase.

The second phase of the project will focus on six or seven lagoons located along the Hoosic River, Florence said. The lagoons are reported to contain chromium, arsenic, mercury, cadmium, lead and III trichloroethane used in tanning skins, according to Knowles.

The Environmental Protection Agency previously designated the site as a human health hazard as part of its Superfund study.

But federal law requires an independent study to be performed on all Superfund sites,

Knowles said.

The EPA is focused more on environmental impact, whereas the agency only looks at health hazards. "We conduct the separate study to ensure that public health is taken care of," Knowles said.

The public assessment will be available for review at the Solomon Wright Library beginning Sept. 15.

The public comment period is from Sept. 15 through Oct. 15.

Written comments should be sent to ATSDR Chief, Program Evaluation, Records and Information Services Branch, 1600 Clifton Road, NE, Mailstop E-56 Atlanta, Ga. 30333

Article last updated:

Wednesday, September 20, 2000 3:26 AM MST

&lt; Index &gt;

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## Report on Pownal Tannery site a work in progress

By Susan P. Bush

Berkshire Eagle Staff

POWNAI, Vt. -- A health risk assessment of the former Pownal Tannery site released last week by the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry should be reviewed by the public but not considered an "end-all" document, according to Susanne Simon, regional representative for the ATSDR.

The report is available at the Solomon Wright Library on Church Street for review by the public.

The tannery site was listed as a Superfund National Priorities List site by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1998 and received federal funding of \$8 million for the demolition of the tannery building, the capping of a landfill once used by the tannery and excavation and reseeded of the building's surrounding grounds. That work began last summer and is nearing completion, according to EPA project supervisor Leslie McVickar.

Superfund revenue did not include remediation of five waste treatment lagoons that are also included as part of the tannery site. McVickar said the EPA is preparing a feasibility study that will examine remediation options for the lagoons and the costs of specific remedies. That report should be released in June, she said.

The public health assessment has designated the site as a public health hazard based on data gathered from the site during ATSDR visits in December 1998 and May 1999. ATSDR officials also met with town residents in May 1999 to discuss concerns about the site.

Among the residents' concerns were the health affects of various contaminants remaining at the former cattle and sheep hide tanning facility when the facility closed its doors in the late 1980s. Contaminants including dioxin, arsenic and cadmium were detected on the site, according to the ATSDR report.

Trespassers and children who played at the site prior to the building demolition and other EPA remediation may have been exposed to hazards by touching contaminated areas, such as building walls, or breathing contaminants, according to the report.

### Exposure assumptions

The report states that because the habits of trespassers cannot be accurately determined, ATSDR officials made "certain assumptions" about trespassers in order to evaluate exposure risks. Those assumptions include the premise that the age of trespassers was school-age and above, that intermittent exposure was occurring at a maximum frequency of three days a week for between two to five hours per day, that exposures to hazards occurred at maximum detected concentrations of those hazards, and that the main manner of exposure was through direct contact with contaminants.



The report states that it is unlikely that non-cancer, adverse health effects would occur due to the specified exposures. According to the report, exposure to contaminants with a documented link to cancer probably caused no significant increased risk of developing cancer because of the exposure.

However, the report does state that the estimated exposure level for manganese exposure in children "slightly exceeded the health guideline." Based on the trespasser assumptions developed by the agency, children who played at the site were probably old enough to have avoided ingesting or eating large quantities of site soil and are unlikely to suffer adverse health effects, the report said.

But the report also refers to certain physical hazards at the site, such as the building, the building's basement and areas near the river that are considered dangerous due to the potential for falling into the river, as current hazards, although they have been rectified by the EPA site remediation.

### **An update required**

"They [the ATSDR] need to have up-to-date data, and we will provide that," McVickar said.

For example, the building has been demolished, guardrails and handrails have been erected near the river, and the site where the building stood has been excavated and reseeded, McVickar said.

Simon explained the discrepancies between the report findings and actual conditions at the tannery.

"This is one of the difficulties of preparing a document while remediation is going on," she said. "When we don't have the most recent data, there is a potential that a document may not state actual conditions. At the time this document was written, changes were being made. The primary contaminants have been mediated by the EPA."

Simon also said that even with the site remediation, the site is no place for children to play.

"But kids will be kids, and where there's a fence, there's a challenge," she said.

Simon also stressed that the report is a draft document.

Updated information will be incorporated into a final report as well as public comments related to the draft document, she said.

Public comment on the assessment will be accepted by the ATSDR until Oct. 16, she said. Comments should be in writing and should be mailed to the Chief, Program Evaluation, Records and Information Services Branch, Division of Health Assessment and Consultation, ATSDR, Mailstop E56, 1600 Clifton Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30333.

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**RUTLAND HERALD**

RUTLAND, VT  
DAILY 22,651

SATURDAY  
NOV 18 2000

MEMPHIS AND NEWSOLP AGENCY, INC.

## Businessman gains rights to 830 acres of forest land

*EPA*  
By **PETER CHARTREE**  
Herald Staff

**POWNAI** — The Vermont Supreme Court on Friday affirmed a Connecticut businessman's right to foreclose on 830 acres of forest land belonging to the Pownal Tanning Co. while abandoning the site of a once-polluted mill.

The court upheld a 1998 Bennington Superior Court decision that Jan Exman of Durham, Conn., could seek partial foreclosure of the Pownal Tanning Co.'s lands, which include the tannery Superfund site.

The state Agency of Natural Resources and the town of Pownal appealed that decision to the high court, arguing that it was bad public policy to allow Exman to "cherry pick" the Tanning Co.'s lands.

The opponents argued that if Exman were not required to "take the bitter with the sweet," it would open the door for similar abuses at other polluted properties.

But the Supreme Court on Friday found that partial foreclosure was a well-established legal principle. And that Exman, as holder of the mortgage, bore no responsibility for polluting the tannery.

"Were our conclusion otherwise, no institution would lend funds to a business for the purpose of cleaning up a polluted site. Tarring plaintiff with responsibility for cleaning up what it never did serve no equitable purpose," the court wrote. Exman welcomed Friday's decision and said he would move forward with his plan to foreclose on nine of the Tanning Co.'s 10 parcels. "We are looking for buyers," he said.

Assistant Attorney General Mark DiStefano said the Agency of Natural Resources was reviewing the implications of the deci-

sion. "We're disappointed," DiStefano said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency razed much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century tannery building earlier this year as part of \$7.7 million clean up of the Superfund site. The open land is now covered in grass and used by pedestrians looking for a view of the Hoosic River.

"It's made the transformation from something that was a real hazard and an attractive nuisance to something that's just attractive," said Brian Woods, an ANR policy analyst.

Nevertheless, Exman said he had no immediate plans to take possession of that parcel.

"When we began the foreclosure, the environmental concerns were still there. Since then, the EPA has cleaned that up. So at the present time, there's very little in the way of foreclosing on that parcel as well. But we don't intend to at this time. We would have to amend the foreclosure complaint and we're not prepared to do that," Exman said.

The town of Pownal is owed several hundred thousand dollars in back property taxes by the Tanning Co. Exman intends to pay off those debts once he forecloses on the forest land, according to his attorney.

The town, meanwhile, could conceivably wind up with the Superfund parcel. The EPA has ruled that Superfund liability does not apply to municipalities that take ownership of contaminated properties through delinquent tax sales.

The Pownal Tanning Co. declared bankruptcy and shut its doors in 1988. Exman bought the mortgage on the property in 1995 from the Bank of Boston for \$40,000. The principal and interest on the tannery's mortgage note total more than \$900,000.

# Bennington Banner

## Pownal tannery land clean-up should start by end of July

By IAN ROMBOLETTI  
Staff Writer

**Friday, June 06, 2003 -**

**POWNAL** — The clean-up for the town's polluted tannery lands should start in the latter part of next month, an environmental official said on Thursday.

The select board held a meeting with members of the Environmental Protection Agency to discuss progress in cleaning the toxic sludge from the former Pownal Tanning Company property. The project could start as early as late July, said Dale Weiss, environmental analyst for TRC Companies, Inc.

"We will be awarding the contracts for the clean up around July 4. The prep work for the clean up should begin by the end of the month, and work continue through December - weather permitting," he said. TRC was contracted through the EPA to oversee the project.

The project should be close to completion by July 2004, but minor work will continue up to the deadline of Sept. 30, 2004.

The project's moving forward is crucial to keeping federal dollars involved in the project, said Leslie McVickar, EPA spokeswoman.

"Washington has to believe the project is deserving of the money it will receive," McVickar said. The town's waste water treatment facility - which will be located on the tannery lands - helped promote the clean up project because, "it is something the town really needs," she said.

Federal money has paid for 90 percent of the project, while the state has kicked in the remaining 10 percent. The current portion of the project will cost \$8.7 million, adding to the \$15 million already spent to clean up the lands.

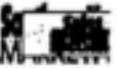
One of the factors holding up the project was getting access to land owned by Guilford Rail Systems, which is part of the project. The EPA came to an agreement with the railroad company that was "very reasonable," McVickar said.

The clean-up will consist of moving 30,000 cubic yards of contaminated sludge from lagoons one and five to lagoon three. A mixture of other materials will be added to the sludge before it is buried, which will remove moisture so the sludge doesn't spread after it is buried, Weiss said.

For more than 50 years, the Pownal Tanning Company operated a cow/sheep hide tanning operation on the site. Before 1962, any hazardous waste produced was discharged directly into the Hoosic River. In 1962, at the direction of the state, the first lagoons were constructed to hold contaminated sludge, covering 18 acres. In 1982, a sludge landfill opened on tannery property.

The lagoons are now loaded with lead, dioxin, PCB, arsenic and chromium. Exposure to these chemicals has been linked to various health hazards, from low sperm count to cancers and heart disorders.

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Article Last Updated:  
Friday, October 04, 2002 - 12:29:15 AM MST

## EPA set to finish tannery

POWNAAL (AP) -- The Environmental Protection Agency wants to consolidate the remaining waste at the closed Pownal Tannery and entomb it under an impermeable cap, the agency announced on Thursday.

The \$8.8 million project will complete the long-term cleanup of the Superfund toxic waste site.

"Our cleanup is being done with the community's interest for the site's future in mind," said EPA Regional Administrator Robert Varney. "This plan moves us closer to getting the property back into active use."

The plan, the third and final phase of the cleanup that has already cost \$15 million, will cost \$8.8 million. Work is slated to begin next spring.

At their meeting Thursday night, members of the Pownal Select Board expressed their pleasure in the EPA's decision to move forward with the clean up plan, saying it was good news.

"That's a big plus for us," said Select Board Chairman Nelson Brownell. "We were concerned that it was stalled."

The EPA will pay 90 percent of the cost with the state of Vermont paying the rest.

Once the cleanup project has been completed, the state of Vermont will be responsible for long-term monitoring and any future work that needs to be done.

The Pownal Tannery, which operated from 1937 to 1988 when the owners filed for bankruptcy, specialized in the chrome tanning of sheepskins.

An analysis of the contents of 18 lagoons at the site found elevated levels of lead, arsenic, chromium, pentachlorophenol and dioxin.

The cleanup began more than a decade ago. Over the years the EPA removed 13,000 pounds of contaminated material and left over solvents and other chemicals. In 2001, a sludge landfill was capped, and the tannery building was demolished.

The final cleanup plan calls for consolidating the remaining sludge into three of five lagoons, capping the lagoons, restore the bank of the Hoosick River and providing for future monitoring of the site.

- Staff writer Noah Hoffenberg contributed to this story

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## Letters

### Not a place to picnic

The recent story by Katie Booker, Banner Aug. 19, under the heading "Pownal plans a community day" seems to raise concerns and questions about this event and its impact on our community.

While it is laudable that a committee of residents of Pownal are interested in community recreation and the betterment of our community, it would appear that more questions than answers are available ... particularly from a committee of citizens without expertise in PCBs and the related cancer associated agents of this byproduct.

The story goes on to state that the event is to provide the committee with the public's ideas on expectations for the sites, it will also be used as an open forum to discuss the problem of PCBs in the Hoosic River.

With the ongoing developments in Clarendon, what appears to be a cancer cluster or high risk area for related cancer diseases, would seem also to be a concern for Pownal as it looks to develop recreation facilities in and around a Superfund site.

We only have to look to the west (GE's cleanup of Hudson River) to see the serious problems, the enormous costs, and health related concerns of dealing with PCBs, very serious community concerns which should not be intertwined with hot-dogs, children and public expectations ... how can we have meaningful expectations if we do not know the extent of the danger that the PCBs would expose our children and residents?

Would sensible people picnic, or "recreation" at or near the Love Canal?

And what's up with the Vermont State Department of Health who will be available for questions and may bring some informational paperwork to distribute? I thought the health department were the experts, not a local recreation citizens committee. Should they not be the point on this type of serious public concern?

When an income survey was requested numerous times at various sewer project hearings and meetings, it was discounted and not deemed necessary to ascertain if the projects cost, could be borne by the community.

I would call upon the powers that be to conduct a survey, a survey of health-related illness and concerns in the Pownal corridor that might shed some significant light on having a recreation area or playground in this area. The community should not have to be exposed to unnecessary health risks at this site or any other site in town without knowing the health liability first.

And what dangers exist in the nearby landfill that also might impact recreation in and about these areas?

RAY SHIELDS  
Pownal

ican Town Band. I also want to thank the Bennington Republican Town Committee for sponsoring and supporting our town band.

This summer the town band gave a free concert at the Village at Fillmore Pond, performed as part of the Better Bennington Corporation's "Summer in the Park Concert Series," and performed on a float in the Battle Day Parade.

During our concert under the tent, we had so many musicians participate that there was little room on the stage left for the conductors! John Dunham performed a wonderful saxophone solo on the theme to "Titanic." Lyndon Moors, our guest conductor, has been a great asset to our band.

At the parade, a mishap in coordination left the band without a truck for its float. As the front sections of the parade were already moving down Main Street, our fortunes changed by a Bennington citizen's great show of community spirit. When Scott Sweet, who was all set to ride his four-wheeler in the parade, realized the band's plight, he volunteered his truck, flat bed trailer and himself to drive the truck. Thank you Mr. Sweet! Thanks also to the Vermont Veterans Home for making your community room available for our rehearsals.

The town band consists of musicians from the full spectrum of ages. It was wonderful to watch teens getting to work next to professional musicians.

The Bennington Republican Town Band is open to any musician who can play at a middle school level or above.

Our last concert this season will be at 4 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 21 at the Bennington Station Restaurant, as part of a celebration of President Calvin Coolidge's visit to Bennington. The afternoon, which is sponsored by The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation ([www.calvin-coolidge.org](http://www.calvin-coolidge.org)), will have many events for all ages to enjoy.

At 2 p.m., "Calvin Coolidge" will be at the Bennington Monument. At 4 p.m., a historic marker will be placed near the Bennington Station Restaurant, where President Coolidge gave his famous "Vermont is the State I love" speech. "President Coolidge" will give his famous speech at 5 p.m.

Student, amateur and professional band musicians are welcome to participate in the Sept. 21 concert. Please call 447-7322 or e-mail [beccashepard@mindspring.com](mailto:beccashepard@mindspring.com) for more information. Musicians need to arrive at the Bennington Station by 3 p.m. wearing a white shirt/blouse and black pants or skirt. Come and join the fun.

REBECCA SHEPARD  
North Bennington

asking them to police the restr help pay for the day night, the P for \$87 billion i pay for it. Acco York Times tha the \$9 billion in a bill last spr for the current Sept. 30. And al of the existing \$! What a mess

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Got an opinion?

Sometime th

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## Despite some interested parties, Pownal tannery use is uncertain

**By Lauren K. Stevens**  
Although the former Pownal Tanning Co. property in North Pownal has been partially cleaned up, the future use of large and holdings and the run-down factory — plus five lagoons and a landfill — remains unsettled.

Besides the building that snakes for hundreds of feet along the Hoosic River, this complicated property includes the reservoir and water system for 20 homes; it includes rare and endangered plant species on a tract to the east side of state Route 346 that the Vermont Nature Conservancy would like to get, wooded land across the New York border that that state's Department of Environmental Conservation would like to acquire and some 900 acres on the Vermont side of the Taconic Range, most of which the U.S. Forest Service would like to add to Green Mountain National Forest.

Jan Ezman, a businessman of Durham, Conn., is interested in picking up the building from the defunct tannery and its hydroelectric system, to generate electricity for tenants-to-be. Averill Cook of Catamount Pellet Fuel Corp., Adams, remains interested, either in developing the site himself or becoming a tenant.

Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources and the federal Environmental Protection Agency are studying the site

and doing limited remediation. ANR development waits further information on the degree of liability that might be inherited.

By a division of labor, Vermont is working on pollution outside the building. Brian Woods, a hydrologist for the Agency of Natural Resources, plans to spend the \$360,000 settlement the state reached with the formerly bankrupt company on capping the former landfill — perhaps after filling a third cell with sludge from the lagoons.

He explains concern about the lagoons, where the company put liquid waste, is based in part on their location within the 100-year flood plain of the Hoosic River. The flood landfill, which has been certified for solid waste, is out of the flood plain. ANR is analyzing material taken from test wells that have been sunk around the landfill and lagoons to see if toxic material is getting into the groundwater — preliminary indications are that a small amount of chromium may be.

Courad Smith, Vermont assistant attorney general for environmental protection, says that if the property were sold in its present condition the state might be able to strike a deal with the new owner to limit his liability, "depending on the benefits," including jobs created. A new owner, however, "would be unlikely to get a complete waiver."

The EPA's Lisa Danek says a concern about liability is likely to prevent anyone buying the property soon.

The federal government worked inside the building. Danek, a native of Rowe, Mass., was site manager for a \$250,000

***Now the EPA is analyzing findings to decide whether to place the property on the National Priority List to take the site to its condition existing before the tannery.***

"limited removal action" completed last summer, funded by Superfund. Among the 370 waste containers disposed of, one 55-gallon drum of a herbicide caused particular concern. Although liquid was removed from bulk tanks on the property, they may still contain some contaminants.

Loose asbestos was removed. Transformers checked negative for polychlorinated biphenyls. Sediment samples were taken in the river, coming up with a variety of harmless substances.

Now the EPA is analyzing findings to decide whether to place the property on the National Priority List to take the site to

its condition existing before the tannery. Danek says that, as an alternative, the site may be one of the first for a new program, the Superfund Accelerated Cleanup Model, in which cleanup could continue without waiting for a final determination of its priority.

Although uncertainties are slowing disposition of the property, John H. Roe, director of land conservation for the Nature Conservancy, says he is "optimistic . . ." The odds are that a deal will fall in place. It's just a slow process. The deal would include a private developer of the building site, Green Mountain National Forest, NYDEC and the Nature Conservancy — which would pick up 50 acres, plus the New York land for resale to that state.

Michael Schrotz of the Forestry Service says he is waiting for the Pownal Selectmen to invite him back to discuss federal ownership of the property, plus 138 acres privately owned just to the south. GMNF wants support from the community before it moves.

Cook, who says he spends \$10,000 to \$12,000 a month on electricity for the grinders used in making wood pellets, is interested in the hydroelectric site. Regarding the dilapidated building with a residue of contamination, Cook says he would just as soon raze it and build anew on the site.

**From:** Ken Norris <kdn13@hotmail.com>  
**To:** pownal@sover.net <pownal@sover.net>; hapsmail@adelphia.net  
<hapsmail@adelphia.net>; brownn@rpi.edu <brownn@rpi.edu>  
**Cc:** knorris@inlandinc.com <knorris@inlandinc.com>  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 10, 2003 9:42 AM  
**Subject:** Response to letter in Banner

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*I would like to respond to Mr. Shields' letter printed this morning in the Banner. I plan to send this ASAP, today. If you have comments, please direct them to my [kdn13@hotmail.com](mailto:kdn13@hotmail.com) e-mail.*  
Ken

#### Letter to the Editor

The members of the Town of Pownal Recreation Implementation Committee would like to thank Mr. Ray Shields for his comments in a recent Letter to the Editor – they give us a perfect opportunity to correct some misconceptions about the committee's plans and the town land the committee is working.

First and foremost, the Pownal tannery mill site and tannery wastewater lagoon areas which the committee is dealing with is not – again, is not – the source of the PCB pollution problem in the Hoosic River and is not the only place where there is such a problem. The source is the old Sprague plants up-river in North Adams, and the entire river – not just the area around the Pownal tannery mill site – possesses an elevated risk of PCB exposure. Local health agencies warn of fish and sediment contamination throughout the river, not just in Pownal. The tannery site has its pollution problems, but the majority of it was soil contamination which is being dealt with by EPA action.

Another point to make is that the tannery mill site and the lagoons are only a small part of the land the town gained possession of last year and which the committee is now reviewing for recreation reuse. There are also more than 800 acres of woodlands, mostly between the Hoosic River and the New York border. There is a warehouse and parking lot on Route 346. There is more to be considered than the sites the EPA has or is the process of cleaning up.

Additionally, it is true that the committee does not have "expertise in PCBs and the related cancer associated agents," as Mr. Shields says. What we do have, however, are concerned citizens who have taken the time to meet with, listen to, and question federal and state officials who do have such expertise.

The issue of PCB risks in the river is one of the major topics being discussed by the committee when it comes to reuse of the area. People use the river now – fishermen, canoeists, kids swimming on hot summer days – so what the committee is considering is how the town should use its river access, including how that access might be used to better inform people as to the condition of the river.

Finally, Mr. Shields says he has questions and concerns about the committee's plans for the old mill site. But every monthly committee meeting has been posted, every meeting has been open to the public, every meeting has seen committee members willing – eager to – listen to any public questions and concerns. Sadly, however, Mr. Shields and few other citizens have attended.

Up to this point, there have been no decisions made, no final recreation plans recommended to the Board of Selectmen for final approval, that is what the committee is

slowly but surely doing now. The reason for the Pownal Community Day is not to say what will be done, but to inform the public on what could be done and see what they want to be done.

The members of the Pownal Recreation Implementation Committee invite Mr. Shields and all Pownal residents interested in the issue to come to the old tannery mill site (state Route 346 at Furlong Road) Saturday, Sept. 20, from noon to 3 p.m. At that time and place, committee members and state health officials will be present, information will be available to the public, and comments and suggestions from the public will be sought.

Ken Norris  
Chairman, Town of Pownal Recreation Implementation Committee  
Pownal

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