

Work halted at Throop Marjol site; probe begins

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THROOP — Gould Electronics issued a temporary stop-work order Wednesday at the Marjol cleanup site following an incident Monday in which a contractor discharged sediment-saturated water into a tributary of the Lackawanna River after he was ordered to stop.

Federal and state environmental officials are investigating why there was a release of muddy water and why, when told to stop, the contractor continued to pump the water into Sulfur Creek.

Testing appears to show there was no release of lead or other contaminants into the water, said Maureen Essentier, project manager for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which is working with the state Department of Environmental Protection to investigate the incident.

“Samples of the mud where water passed over were OK,” said Mark Carmon, a DEP spokesman. “But — and it’s a big but — (the release) should not have occurred. And given the high profile and controversial nature of the project, it’s just bad all around.”

As part of the project, the contractor, SCE Environmental Group, will be capping lead-contaminated soil and battery casings in concrete on the former Marjol site.

To finish construction of a sedimentation basin on the 40-acre site, water needs to be pumped out of the basin. However, when filtering Monday failed to lessen the high “turbidity,” or how muddy the water was, a representative of Advanced GeoServices Corp., which represents Gould, told SCE to stop.

But the contractor continued to pump the water for at least 30 minutes after being told to stop. As of Wednesday, Advanced GeoServices Corp. still could not say how much water was released.

In general, water with high turbidity is prohibited from being released into streams and rivers, said Mr. Carmon, who added “it may be a violation of our regulations.” He declined to speculate what type of penalties might arise from such violations.

Lisa Ayers, a spokeswoman for Advanced GeoServices, which represents Gould, confirmed the company had voluntarily shut down work Wednesday. She said a meeting is scheduled for today between the company, contractor and environmental agencies.

Council President Tom Lukasewicz applauded that Gould appeared to be taking the incident seriously.

“It’s very good,” he said. “We’ve got to be careful. People don’t realize, with contamination, we’re not just talking Throop, but Dickson (City) and Scranton. We’re talking about all of Northeastern Pennsylvania that’s affected.”

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