

Rubber companies settle IEL lawsuit

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By KELLI YOUNG Repository staff writer

LAKE TWP. — After 14 years in federal court, five rubber companies have agreed to finish the cleanup of the Industrial Excess Landfill and reimburse the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \$18 million for work already done at the Superfund site.

The settlement — agreed upon by Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., Goodyear Aerospace Corp., Bridgestone/Firestone, B.F. Goodrich Co. and GenCorp — may end a portion of the lawsuit filed by the federal government in October 1989.

The agreement was lodged Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Cleveland and awaits the judge's approval.

Paul Wolford, spokesman for the rubber companies, did not return a call seeking comment.

Another eight parties that the EPA believes also are liable for the landfill's cleanup have not reached a settlement or had a judgment entered in the lawsuit.

The government has accused the rubber companies of arranging for the disposal of hundreds of thousands of gallons of waste solvent at the Cleveland Avenue N landfill. A variety of chemical pollutants have been found in the ground water at and near the site.

The settlement requires the companies to continue with their cleanup efforts at the site, which includes planting trees and other vegetation and monitoring the ground water to make sure the contamination continues to decline.

"The settlement will benefit Uniontown as it will expedite completion of the remedial action," said Blain Rethmeier, spokesman for the U.S. Department of Justice.

He said the money cannot be used for general purposes around the township.

Most of the settlement money, about \$15 million, will be put into a special account that will be available to finance any additional expenses, Rethmeier said. Most of the remaining funds will be used to replenish the EPA's Superfund account.

Ohio recoups \$875,000 of past costs through the settlement. Of that, \$5,000 will go to Attorney General Jim Petro's office.

Rethmeier did not know how the settlement award would be split among the companies.

Residents who want to comment on the settlement award can do so during a 30-day comment period, Rethmeier said.

He said the judge will take the comments into consideration when determining whether to approve the award.

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