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Hazardous site study approved

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PONTIAC -- Livingston County officials hope an independent analysis of a hazardous-waste site south of Streator will help start cleanup efforts of the area.

The county and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency have different figures on how much money it will cost to clean up the former Smith-Douglass fertilizer plant, which closed almost 20 years ago.

The former plant in Newton Township has acidic ponds, asbestos and unsafe levels of radiation. The county, along with state Sen. Dan Rutherford, R-Chenoa, believed a cleanup would cost about \$1 million. The IEPA says the project is at least \$5.5 million.

County board members want the cleanup project, which has been stagnant for months, to start moving forward again. They believe the study will show what needs to be done at the 124-acre site.

The county board's Agriculture and Zoning Committee approved hiring Deigan and Associates to study the area. The firm will be paid about \$3,000 for the work and results will take about a month.

Committee chairman Jon Gormbel said the information will help get money from either the IEPA or the federal environmental agency to start improving the area

"We are concerned and interested in seeing that something happens to get this cleaned up," he said. "If we just sit on our laurels, I don't think anything going to happen."

Deigan, an environmental engineering firm from Libertyville, has worked with the county on both the Livingston County and Streator landfills.

Chuck Schopp of the county's planning commission said the firm will take about five water samples, review an IEPA report and visit the site.

"They will look at the most recent data," he said. "It will be an independent perspective. Hopes are to get it moving along."

Cleanup efforts started a few years ago but were stopped when state funding was frozen. Under the plan, Rutherford secured a \$1 million state grant that would go to the Livingston County Jail. The county would then earmark \$1 million out of a separate fund to give to the IEPA to pay for the cleanup.