

Company that dumped nuclear waste wants to buy tainted land

Chicago Sun-Times, May 17, 2005, by Steve Patterson

A Dixmoor company that admits it dumped nuclear waste in a forest preserve now wants to buy that contaminated land.

But some say the plan to purchase is simply a way for Chicago Magnesium Casting to get out of the costly job of restoring the land to forest preserve quality.

The district has been monitoring a cleanup of the contamination in Calumet Woods and just last week received the offer to buy the three-quarters of an acre of wooded preserve.

'A far harder look'

"Before we can even begin to discuss notions of selling off portions of district land," district spokesman Steve Mayberry said, "we need to take a far harder look at what's been done to the land and how we are going to address issues including restitution for what's been done at that site."

Chicago Magnesium's Ken Goes declined comment on the proposal.

But in a letter, the company told the district that since 2000, it has been working with state and federal regulators to meet new, stricter guidelines for disposing of buried waste, which it describes as "a huge financial commitment."

Though it doesn't provide specifics, the company says that after the district granted it a permit to remove the waste, it found "considerably more" waste than it had expected on the district property.

The company, which makes castings used by military aircraft, had permits to bury the low-level radioactive waste years ago.

How clean?

But a spokesman for Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Ill.), who has secured more than \$1 million for its cleanup, said the waste also pushed into a "sliver" of forest preserve property the company once thought belonged to them instead.

"They're going to clean it up," spokesman Rick Bryant said. "It's just a matter of whether it's up to a park or industrial standard."

But already, Friends of the Forest Preserves are urging the district to hold the company to strict standards for cleanup efforts.