

DEQ official seeking emergency cleanup of Dewey site

■ An analyst with the state Department of Environmental Quality wants the agency to declare an 'emergency situation' at the abandoned R. H. Dewey site and make funds available to clean up the property.

By **DAVE MOORE**
Bedford Now

A state Department of Environmental Quality official is asking the state to declare the abandoned R.H. Dewey industrial site in Temperance "an emergency situation," so the property can be cleared.

"My next step is to talk to my supervisor to see if we could get the funds to actually remove the contaminants and the containers," said state DEQ Analyst Peter Masson. "We talk it over; then talk to the folks in Lansing, and we fill out paperwork explaining that we feel it's an emergency situation."

The 35-acre site — which includes a ramshackle home, an abandoned warehouse and 29 55-gallon drums of unknown substances — has languished for more than a year because gov-

ernment officials and developers are uncertain if there is pollution on the property.

The site is located a half-mile southeast of Temperance Rd. and Lewis Ave. intersection, behind the train tracks at the southeastern end of Armstrong St.

The property's current owner, Rose Wendt, is in a Toledo nursing home and can't afford to have the property tested for contamination, her lawyer, Monroe attorney Mark McClellan, has said in interviews with Bedford Now.

Masson, in an interview with Bedford Now Jan. 23, said he realizes the situation at the Dewey site likely won't be resolved unless that state takes action.

Masson said chances of getting approval for the clean up are good, based on his experience in requesting funds for emergency clean-ups. He said the state would affix liens on the property based on the cost of the clean up to attempt to recoup expense.

The site contains 29 55-gallon drums of unknown substances, 50 one- and five-gallon pails, three above-ground fuel tanks and two cardboard barrels, according to a letter written by Masson to McClellan, dated April 1, 2002.

“ My next step is to talk to my supervisor to see if we could get the funds to actually remove the contaminants and the containers.”

— Peter Masson,
state DEQ analyst

Also on the property are four semi-truck trailers. Not mentioned in the letter are the former home of Rose and her late husband, Blake Wendt, and an abandoned warehouse.

The township has declared the buildings on the site to be dangerous, but is awaiting the go-ahead from the state DEQ before clearing the site so the township isn't held liable.

Bedford Township Supervisor LaMar Frederick had told Bedford Now the issue would be raised at the Jan. 21 township board meeting. Frederick later said he didn't do so because the township hadn't heard back from the state DEQ.

In previous interviews,

Masson said he believes the barrels and pails on the site aren't leaking, but that they need to be cleaned up.

Walter Rodd, who used to live about a quarter mile from the Dewey site, said he was glad to hear the state was moving on the site.

He said he remembers as a boy in the '50s seeing buried barrels in the back of the property.

Meanwhile, a former Dewey employee told Bedford Now recently that employees only dumped harmless materials in the woods behind Dewey.

"All they did was dump concrete," said Eugene Grow, 83, of Swanton, Ohio. "That's all they dumped."

Grow said the firm dealt mostly in gunite — concrete that can be sprayed onto steel bars — and that's what was in barrels dumped in the back 40 of the Dewey property in the '50s.

The business — bought by Kenneth Rhoads of Toledo in 1990 — collapsed in 2001, and the site was abandoned.

Many half-rusted barrels still protrude from the ground at that location.

Grow said he worked at the site for 45 years, until business dropped off at Dewey.

Masson said he plans to

WHAT THEY FOUND

The 35-acre R.H. Dewey site, located southeast of Temperance Rd. and Lewis Ave., has been abandoned since 2001, and some wonder what may be buried at the site.

The state Department of Environmental Quality found during a visit to the 35-acre location:

- A home (abandoned)
- A warehouse (abandoned)
- 29 55-gallon drums (containing unknown substances)
- 20 one- and five-gallon pails
- Three above-ground fuel tanks
- Two cardboard barrels
- Four semi-truck trailers

interview Grow about the matter.

Rodd, meanwhile, said he'd like to be on hand for the excavation at Dewey.

"I can show them exactly where all those barrels are buried," he said.