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DEC promises quick testing at former Wallace site

By Jennie Daley

Journal Staff

ITHACA — Department of Environmental Conservation commissioner Pete Grannis has committed to testing soil for contamination at the former Wallace Industries site, a spokesperson said Wednesday.

The move was in response to a report in Tuesday's Ithaca Journal detailing a history of contamination at the Cherry Street site.

According to documents from the late 1960s and '70s, oil from scrap metal stored at the site seeped off the waste piles and into nearby Cayuga Inlet, which feeds into Cayuga Lake.

Some of the scrap in question was delivered from the former Morse Chain plant on South Hill, where investigations into solvent contamination are ongoing.

It is unclear whether trichloroethylene, or TCE, which is the main chemical of concern at the factory, was present on material delivered to Wallace. A likely carcinogen, TCE has shown up in the air of homes downhill from the factory, now owned by Emerson Power Transmission.

Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton, D-125th, talked with Grannis Tuesday and said he committed to further investigation during their conversation.

"I spoke with Commissioner Grannis about my grave concerns with regard to toxins in Ithaca and the need for immediate action," Lifton said in a press release.

"The Commissioner has agreed to investigate the matter right away and will send DEC staff to the Wallace Industries site."

When asked when the investigation would occur, DEC spokeswoman Maureen Wren said it would happen "in coming weeks."

Ownership of Wallace changed hands four year ago and is now Reamer Recycling, owned by William S. Reamer of Ithaca.
