

Powell River Grate Ash/Lime Dregs Appeal: Substantive Victory!

The BC Ministry of Environment has released its decision on the appeal of the Powell River kraft pulp mill's permit to spread grate ash and lime dregs in "experimental" applications. The appeal, by writer Anne Cameron, Paddy Goggins, and Reach for Unbleached, was denied in its attempt to have the permit squashed, but substantively upheld in the matter of further testing as requested by Reach and ordered by Deputy Director of Waste Management Dave F. Brown, the official hearing the appeal.

The mill wished to use the grate ash as a roadbed material, and apply the lime dregs to a disused golf course as a soil amendment.

The decision grouped the grounds for appeal and responded to each argument.

A) The permit fails to protect the environment:

* insufficient data to support the benign nature of the waste * less than adequate testing of the current waste disposal systems

1. samples were old

2. small data base to examine

3. using the literature to support decisions rather than site specific data.

"For the most part" dismissed: "However the data presented is inadequate to determine if the beneficial reuse option should be pursued," especially at more than one site. Permit to be amended to require additional testing before any disposal: seven different samples to be analysed for the heavy metals, dioxins and furans, total PAHs, and phenolics identified in Schedules 4 & 5 of the Contaminated Sites Regulation. Testing required because of anomalies in analyses, and some high values for metals and organics. Results to be tabulated and made public.

B) The permit violates the precautionary principle

* design of experimental project is flawed

* potential for waste materials to end up in surface water

UPHELD! Permit must be amended to require:

1. detailed hydrogeological studies on both sites before disposal
2. detailed evaluation of grate ash test plot roadbed compared to current one, by professional engineer, every three months for a year.
3. a study by a professional agronomist to compare soil amendment qualities of lime dregs versus agricultural lime versus control site. Also a before and after ecological study "to include comparative species transit surveys to determine the community abundance and species identity of soil organisms, such as worms etc., and vegetative quality should be conducted."
4. Installation of a berm to prevent materials from leaving the test site
5. Installation of a fence to prevent accidental trespass.

The mill claimed these dispersals were "beneficial re-use" but the ministry said that no benefit had yet been proven and at this point the dispersals were "a linear landfill" and a "overland flow disposal system."

C) The waste material contains phthalates, including DEHP

Denied; but additional testing to determine if the DEHP was a "transitory contaminant."

D) lack of public consultation

Denied

Copies of all required reports to be provided to appellants and the community

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