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Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

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What effects will there be on the environment and biodiversity?

A key aim of the Department is to minimise any adverse impacts on environmental values. The excavation work will be done in a way that minimises any degradation to soil, water and vegetation. The Department of Environmental Protection will approve all work. Dieback considerations have also been taken into account and all vehicles and equipment will be cleaned to avoid contamination and the spread of the dieback fungus.

Will we be kept informed of the quantity and the type of chemicals found?

Yes, the Department is committed to keeping the public informed at all times of any chemical containers found, the quantity and method of disposal. Disposal will be conducted at approved sites in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Environmental Protection.

What about the previous testing done before the development of the Dwellingup Caravan Park?

When plans to develop the Dwellingup Caravan Park were announced in 1991, concerns were raised about the possible presence of buried chemical containers at the site.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management investigated these concerns and took 230 samples from the area for testing for chemicals.

No chemicals were detected in the soil samples, however some chemical traces that were many times less than the World Health Organisation's standards were detected in a nearby stream. A decision was made by a local committee of stakeholders to proceed with the development of the Caravan Park. This sampling was capable of detecting chemicals but not chemical containers. Consequently, the Department now believes the testing of the early 1990s may not have been sufficient or in the appropriate areas.

Where can I get further information?

Further information can be obtained by contacting Mark Humble at the Department of Conservation and Land Management Dwellingup Office on Ph: 9538 1078 or by email: markh@calm.wa.gov.au



**A MESSAGE TO
RESIDENTS OF**

DWELLINGUP



Early this year, concerns were raised about the possible disposal of chemical containers in forest areas near the Dwellingup townsite. The Department of Conservation and Land Management has taken these concerns seriously and undertaken preliminary testing on identified sites. Testing has revealed the possible presence of chemical containers in certain areas and work is planned to have them removed.

A key priority of the Department is to ensure that the community of Dwellingup is kept informed at all stages of this process. This leaflet has been designed to answer your questions and provide you with information.

Background

Concerns raised early this year suggested a contaminated batch of chemicals containing dioxin, imported to Western Australia between 1969 and 1971, may have been buried at a site near Dwellingup.

In the 1970s, chemical containers were buried by the Forests Department in disused gravel pits near the Dwellingup townsite. This practice of disposal was in line with accepted standards and guidelines at the time.

Following recent concerns, the Department and the Department of Environmental Protection called for former and current employees to come forward with any information about the disposal of chemical containers in the Dwellingup area.

Information gathered from former and present employees and Department records has now identified four possible areas for further investigation.

Investigation of sites

Electromagnetic ground-based surveys have been conducted by an experienced company Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey, on the four areas – three of which are in State forest to the west of Dwellingup and one on a Crown reserve.

The results of the surveys showed possible presence of metal containers on three of the four sites.

Where to now?

The Department of Conservation and Land Management has engaged an accredited environmental consultant to prepare a remediation action plan for excavating, removing and disposing of any chemical containers and contaminated soil that are found at these areas. The plan has been approved by the Department of Environmental Protection's Pollution Prevention Division. The consultant has extensive experience in this type of operation and will ensure the operation is comprehensive. The public will be kept informed of the dates of commencement, duration of work and any road closures that may result.

A key priority of the Department is to ensure public safety at all times and to minimise any adverse impacts from this work on the natural environment.

The work will be done in full consultation with the Department of Environmental Protection, the Health Department and other relevant authorities

When will work begin and how long will it take?

Work is expected to start in late May. All residents of Dwellingup will be kept informed of the start date and duration (it is anticipated the work will take at least five days). Public notices will be placed in local newspapers and information can be obtained from the Department's website – www.naturebase.net Subsequent soil testing will also be conducted on the areas following any excavation and retrieval.

Is there an immediate threat to personal health?

No, the excavation work will be done in strict compliance with Department of Environmental Protection and Health Department requirements. The public will also be kept fully informed on when work takes place and areas will be cordoned off as appropriate. As a precautionary measure the Department will also test surrounding soil and if necessary remove it.