

# Recovery project met main goal, feds say

By Larry Oakes  
Northern Minnesota Correspondent

Duluth, Minn.

Although they came up empty-handed, federal officials trying to recover some of the 1,432 barrels of military refuse dumped into Lake Superior 30 years ago say the effort was a success.

Bob Dempsey, manager of the recovery project for the Army Corps of Engineers, said Wednesday that even though the project ran out of money and stalled Tuesday without recovering a barrel, it was a success because searchers accomplished their main goal of finding and photographing some of the barrels.

Dempsey said they'll try to get the permission and money necessary to continue a quest this fall to recover some of the barrels, dumped in 1961 by the Army and Honeywell Inc.

Extremely high waves on the western end of the lake starting Wednesday would have made continuing the project yesterday impossible anyway, officials said.

On Saturday, the third day of the operation, crews using sonar, magnetometers and underwater videocameras discovered one of the seven areas into which the Army and Honeywell secretly dumped barrels between 1959 and 1962, to get rid of what they now say was scrap metal from a classified explosives project.

Some critics say they worry that the barrels may have contained radioactive material or hazardous waste because traces of uranium and chemical wastes have been found in the floor drains of the building where Honeywell worked on ammunition and explosive projects for the Army at its Arden Hills ammunition plant.

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The discovery site, which searchers say was used by the barrel dumpers in 1961, is about a mile off the Talmadge River mouth, on Lake Superior's North Shore near Duluth, in about 160 to 180 feet of water, said Dempsey.

The search found and mapped 105 barrels in apparently good condition, sitting on sandy silt in an area of about 2 square miles, said Dempsey. Geiger-counter readings taken Tuesday by a search submarine "didn't detect even a trace" of radioactivity, he said. <sup>HAROLD MALINARD SAID HE WAS NOT ALLOWED TO SEARCH AREA</sup> Searchers made four submarine dives Tuesday to try to pull up one of the barrels, estimated to weigh at least 1,100 pounds. The effort was defeated by a submarine power failure, heavy bottom silt that obstructed vision and a clamp that slipped off the barrel when a tugboat tried to raise it, crew members said.

"We didn't expect to find them (the barrels) so deep and we didn't expect them to be so darn heavy," said Mike Stich of Hazard Control Inc., the Minneapolis firm that was awarded a five-day, \$17,000 contract to search for them.

The project, financed by the federal pollution-abatement "superfund," will be on hold until the corps can secure more money and permission from Washington, said Dempsey, an engineer in the corps' St. Paul district.

"We have to take it one step at a time, but for now we would really like to recover a representative sample of those 105 barrels," he said.