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1985 state map showed Willington quarry tainted

Owners could have known of mineral ruining foundations

By Eric Bedner

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WILLINGTON — The quarry that supplied the area with faulty concrete aggregate for decades sits entirely on a bed of rock

that contains pyrrhotite, information that was easily accessible since at least 1985 from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

A DEEP map shows the Willington quarry situated on rock containing pyrrhotite,

the iron-sulfide mineral causing concrete foundations to deteriorate. This does not mean that all extracted material from the quarry contains pyrrhotite, however.

The map was first published in 1985 and would have been available to buy from DEEP, spokesman Chris Collibee said this week.

■ SEE **QUARRY** / PAGE 3

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Survey found veins of pyrrhotite through eastern C

■ QUARRY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Since then, DEEP has made information significantly more available through its website, he said.

Collibee noted, however, that detailed localized maps of the Becker quarry area in Willington still are unpublished. The quarry no longer provides aggregate for residential projects, and owners say they're out of the concrete business.

Bedrock mapping in Connecticut and other states was made possible through a partnership between the state and federal governments under the National Cooperative Geological Mapping Program, mandated by the National Geological Mapping Act of 1992.

Not all areas of Connecticut have detailed geological mapping available because the Connecticut Geological Survey competes annually with other states for federal geological mapping funds, Collibee said.

During a legislative hearing in Hartford last week about implementing recommendations by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to test quarries for pyrrhotite, questions were raised about steps the owners of the Willington quarry could have taken to ensure they were providing quality material.

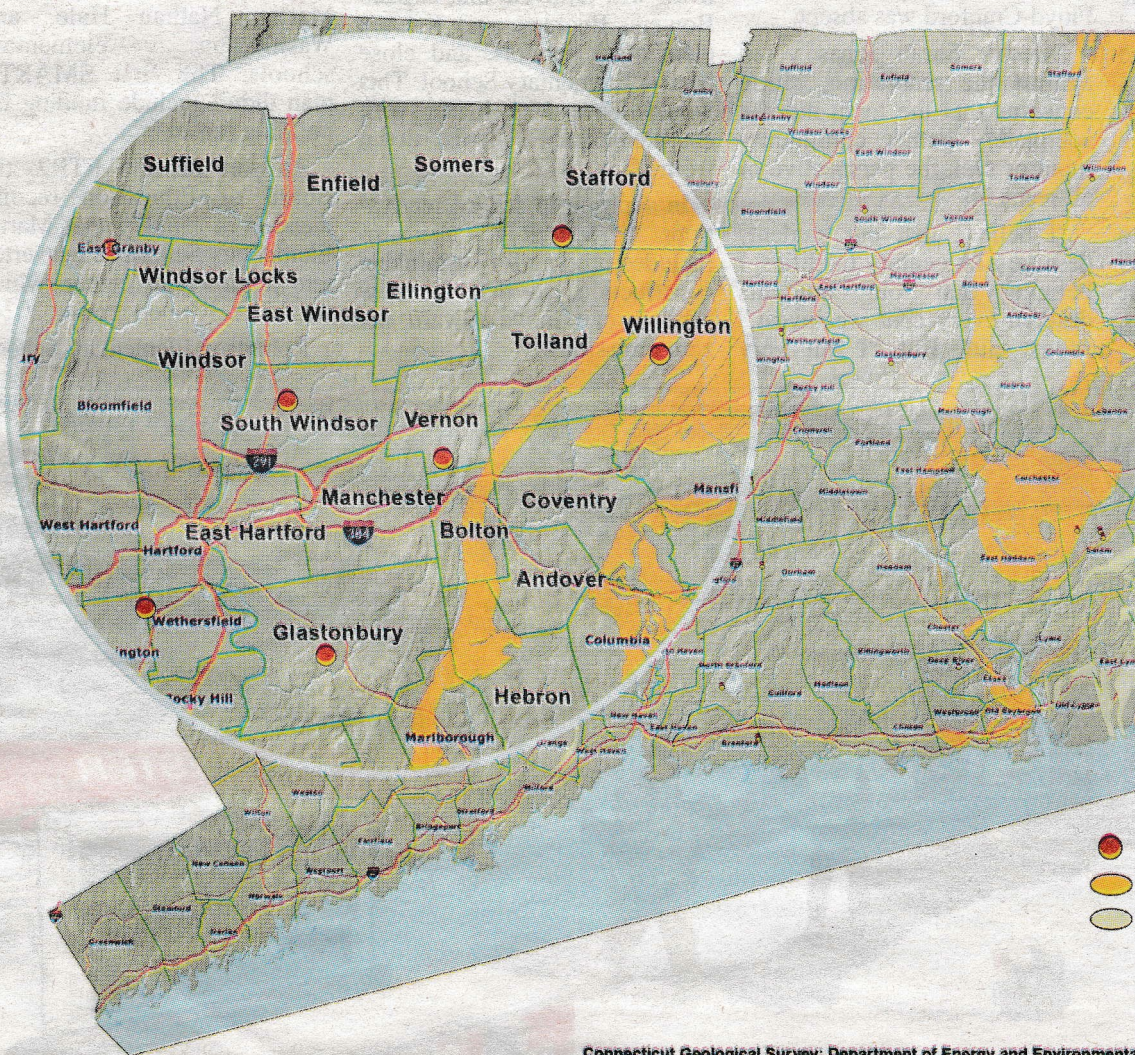
While testifying against the Corps' recommendations, the owner of a geologic firm said the quarry's owners should have known their aggregate was not suitable for concrete.

Michael Wright, owner of the North American Reserve, a geological firm that evaluates aggregate for those seeking to purchase quarries, opposes legislation that would require quarry owners to routinely test for the presence of sulfidic material such as pyrrhotite.

He said that when his company is asked to evaluate a quarry, the first step is to look up the U.S. Geologic Survey mapping of the site, then state maps, and finally more localized maps of the area.

"We look at the rock types and figure out what we want to do for testing right away."

Connecticut geologic units containing pyrrhotite and active



Connecticut Geological Survey: Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Bedrock Geological Map of Connecticut Connecticut Geological and Natural History Survey Natural Resources Atlas Series

When there is a rock type with a sulfidic modifier "that immediately would have told us that it is not a rock you want to use to create a quarry."

MICHAEL WRIGHT

Owner of geological evaluation company

He added that the USGS states that the Becker quarry in Willington contains sulfidic schist.

When there is a rock type

immediately would have told us that it is not a rock you want to use to create a quarry," Wright said, adding that pyrrhotite is mentioned in the quarry's primary minerals.

John Patton, spokesman for the Becker quarry, declined repeated requests for comment.

While the Willington quarry has been in operation for more than 70 years — well before the 1985 geologic mapping — the first known case of a foundation crumbling due to pyrrhotite was in a home built in 1983.

Rep. Timothy Ackert, R-Coventry, said the Army Corps of Engineers bill is part of a continued effort to ensure that quality product is being used for new foundations.

The measure is facing opposition from the construction

Donald Shubert, president of the Connecticut Construction Industries Association, said he "had concerns immediately" upon attending the Corps' presentation in October.

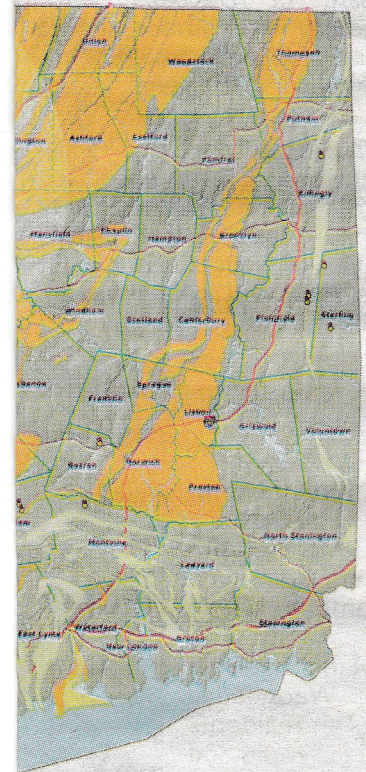
He said quarry oversight already has occurred and doesn't need to be repeated since pyrrhotite-related issues have come from only a single quarry in the state.

Costs associated with testing, Shubert said, could lead small and high production quarries to close.

Department of Consumer Protection Commissioner Michelle Seagull said that if the bill becomes law, it would require her agency to implement testing and research methods proposed by the Corps. While she appreciates the intent of the

Connecticut

Active bedrock quarries



- 2014-2015 Active Quarries
- Rocks containing Pyrrhotite
- Rocks containing Pyrite



Environmental Protection www.ct.gov/deep/geology
Series. 2 sheets, 1:125,000 (Rodgers, 1985)

resources to implement it, she said.

"If this bill should become law, the department would need to hire multiple administrative staff as well as a subject matter expert such as a geologist," Seagull said.

Rep. Thomas Delnicki, R-South Windsor, said he has "a huge amount of confidence" in the Corps' ability to develop a reasonable standard, adding that if the proposed standards were in place in the early 1980s, the crumbling foundation crisis may never have occurred.

A series of concrete-related bills, including the Army Corps of Engineers proposal, will be heard during a joint committee public hearing at 1 p.m. at the Legislative Office Building.