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Man in ACRES "pollution case" jailed

SINGAPORE: The director of a building company was jailed on Wednesday for two weeks and fined for allowing his subcontractor to illegally dispose industrial waste at a construction site.

In 2006, ANA Contractor was engaged by the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) to build a wildlife rescue centre at Jalan Lekar, near Choa Chu Kang.

But ANA allowed its subcontractor to illegally dump toxic woodchips on site, resulting in the discharge of polluting substances into the watercourse, which could have flowed into the nearby Kranji catchment area.

ANA was fined S\$330,000 after pleading guilty in June to 30 of 34 charges.

Its director, Tan Boon Kwee, was jailed two weeks and fined S\$65,000 after pleading guilty to 13 of the 33 charges against him.

The court heard that more than two years ago, ANA had been served with a notice under the Environmental Protection and Management Act to clean up the waste.

But the National Environment Agency's prosecuting officer, Abdullah Ghani, told the court the firm had not done so.

He added that to remedy the situation, some enclosures at the rescue centre would have to be demolished and rebuilt.

The woodchips would have to be removed and he said the cost would be "tremendous".

Mr Abdullah said contractors had quoted ACRES between S\$4.4 million and S\$7.5 million to get the job done.

He said if ANA did not carry out the work, ACRES faced the prospect of footing the bill.

Mr Abdullah pressed for a deterrent sentence for both ANA and Tan, who he said was not remorseful.

Senior District Judge See Kee Oon agreed with the prosecution, saying the key aggravating factor in the case was the "pollutant potential" of the woodchips.

Defence Counsel Lee Kok Weng told the court his client would like to postpone his jail term by a week as he needed to make arrangements for someone to care for his child while he was imprisoned.

Senior District Judge See granted Tan a bond of S\$10,000 and said he had to surrender himself by noon, next Thursday.