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DEP blocks Wal-Mart construction because of environmental violations

Wal-Mart must roll back its construction schedule.

Repeated environmental violations at other stores have prompted state officials to hold up the retailer's new store near the Richland Mall in Butler County.

"Yes, there is a ban on construction because of ongoing violations here and in the eastern part of the state," said Betsy Mallison, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Environmental Protection. "We're holding up this permit until other problems get straightened out."

Richland supervisors approved the new store's construction last year, and it was supposed to open in December.

Mallison said DEP has had problems with Wal-Mart construction projects since a construction of a Beaver County store in 1993 caused sedimentation and siltation into a stream.

Most violations involve erosion, siltation and sedimentation of streams and disturbance of wetlands, she said.

Sedimentation problems occurred when a store was built in North Versailles and 1.5 acres of wetlands in Ebensburg were disturbed by a store built there.

A project in Lackawanna County disturbed a quarry and caused a rock slide, letting loose a boulder that crashed into a business.

Wal-Mart spokesman Les Copeland said some of the projects were built by developers who operate under leases with Wal-Mart.

Copeland said the problems in Pennsylvania represent "a very isolated situation."

"We'll do the right thing," he said. "We're taking the issue very seriously."