

Officials in North China punished over sewage pits

Several officials in Dacheng County in North China's Hebei Province were punished after media reports exposed the state of two sewage pits, local discipline inspection authorities said on Saturday.

Liu Guowang, director of the office of the county committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), received an intra-Party warning, according to a statement by the Langfang Municipal commission for discipline inspection of the CPC.

From September 2013 to February 2017, Liu was the deputy head of the county in charge of the county's environmental protection work. The county government failed to supervise or help Nanzhaofu Township deal with the sewage pits the statement said.

Liu Zenghuai, former secretary of the township committee of the CPC, who did not highlight the problem of the sewage pits and failed to deal with the pollution should be responsible for the problem, it said. Liu Zenghuai and Ma Donghao, head of Nanzhaofu Township, also received intra-Party warnings.

Deputy head of Dacheng County Xiao Jianjun, and director of the county's environmental protection bureau Fan Junliang, and three other local officials receive a public notice of criticism since they have only been in their posts for a short time, according to the statement.

Pictures of the contaminated pools went viral on Tuesday after a report from an environmental organization exposed the pollution.

Two polluted pools – 170,000 square meters and 30,000 square meters – formed by years of digging and illegal dumping of waste acid in 2013, have contaminated water and soil in the area.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) has sent investigation teams to look at the pits and ordered local authorities to intensify monitoring of water and soil in and around the pools.

Dacheng authorities have started to treat the pollution and has set aside 38 million yuan (\$5.59 million) to treat the pits in 2017.