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Buffalo District
<http://www.lrb.usace.army.mil/>
March 26, 2007

PRESS RELEASE

Release No. 07-08

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Corps of Engineers Releases Tonawanda Landfill Report

BUFFALO -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Buffalo District has released the Tonawanda Landfill Proposed Plan report which details the Corps' recommendation for the radionuclide residues (radium, thorium and uranium) found at the site.

The Corps has extended the public review period for the document to 90 days - from March 26, 2007 to June 26, 2007. Additionally, the Corps will be holding a meeting to collect public comment on April 25, 2007, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Tonawanda High School Auditorium.

As the Corps reported last year in its Remedial Investigation Report for the site, it found small, isolated locations within the Tonawanda Landfill Vicinity Property that contained levels of uranium, radium and thorium above normal background levels. To ensure the safety of the public, the Corps also conducted a Baseline Risk Assessment as part of the Remedial Investigation to determine the risk to human health from these radionuclides. The Corps announced then that the human health risks from the uranium, radium and thorium detected at the site are at or below the risk limits established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), for both the current and potential future uses of the site. The Corps also conducted extensive sampling to ensure that these radionuclides have not migrated off the Landfill property.

It its Proposed Plan document, the Corps recommends a No Action alternative. This means that because the human health risks meet USEPA guidelines, the soils in the Landfill that contain uranium, radium and thorium can remain safely in place in their current condition. Moreover, once the Landfill is capped by the property owner, the risk to human health will be well below USEPA risk levels, and therefore even more protective.

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The Corps emphasizes that a Proposed Plan is just one phase in a lengthy process of investigating a site. The Proposed Plan is not a final decision. In fact, the Corps will not reach a final decision until the Agency carefully reviews and evaluates all comments received about its recommendation and Proposed Plan report. “I understand,” stated LTC John Hurley, Commander, USACE Buffalo District, “that the issues and concerns of this site are larger than just the waste and risks associated with the early atomic weapons and energy programs. That is why we have been and will continue to work with other federal and state agencies, as well as local and federal elected officials, to address concerns and issues that exceed the Corps’ legal authority. I take the responsibility for this mission very seriously; look forward to receiving comments on our proposal, and, working with all of our partners to resolve public concerns.”

The Proposed Plan will be placed in the Administrative Record File on March 26th. The administrative record file for the Tonawanda Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP) sites is located at 333 Main Street in Tonawanda, New York, at the Tonawanda Public Library. The report and summary information will also be available on the USACE, Buffalo District website at: www.lrb.usace.army.mil/fusrap. The public may also obtain copies of the report by calling the USACE toll free number at 1-800-833-6390.

The Record of Decision report, which follows the public comment period, will respond to all comments received and will document the final decision for the FUSRAP portion of the site.