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Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP)

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# ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD

for  
Niagara Falls Storage Site

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# Bechtel

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APR 22 1994

University of Tennessee  
Energy, Environment & Resource Center  
327 S. Stadium Hall  
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-0710

Attention: Dave Feldman

Subject: FUSRAP - Transmittal of FUSRAP Community Relations  
Weekly News Clippings

Dear Dave:

Enclosed are copies of our weekly news clippings for the week ending Friday, April 22, 1994. Please do not hesitate to call if you have questions or need additional information. My telephone number is 576-5034.

Sincerely,



Sandra W. Plant  
Community Relations - Manager

SWP:cw:CR\_0022

Enclosures: FUSRAP Weekly  
News Clippings



**Bechtel National, Inc.**

## METROPOLITAN NEWS

# Agency seeks options on N-waste disposal

*Tonawanda residents urged to find alternatives to sending material to Utah*

By FARAH SAFIUDDIN  
News Tonawanda Bureau

Last week, the U.S. Department of Energy backed away from its efforts to consolidate nuclear waste from four Manhattan Project sites in a cell along the Niagara River.

This week, it asked the local opposition to do the same — back away from efforts to have all the waste transported to Utah.

During a meeting Wednesday with residents and elected officials in the DOE's Town of Tonawanda office, a DOE official asked that both sides come to the table for a fresh look at options.

"I will promise to open up the process. I ask you to come up with other alternatives than sending it all to Clive, (Utah)," said Richard Guimond, an admiral in the Public Health Service and

an official from the DOE's Office of Environmental Management.

At issue is about 8,000 tons of contaminated waste from the Manhattan Project at the Seaway Landfill, two old Ashland Refinery properties and the former Linde Air Products Corp. plant in Tonawanda.

The community, led by a group of elected officials known as the Coalition Against Nuclear Materials in Tonawanda (CANiT), opposed a DOE technical study that recommended combining most of the waste at a storage facility on River Road. CANiT instead has pushed for transporting the waste to the Utah facility.

The main concerns focused on health-related issues, the environmental impact on the river and the town's waterfront development plans.

Guimond said the DOE will accept these "key values" and asked the com-

munity to recognize a major DOE concern: money.

"We have to find a way to do this as inexpensively as possible," Guimond said. "If we take all the material from here to Utah, why not do it for all the sites (across the country)."

Guimond said it would cost an estimated \$5 billion to transport Manhattan Project waste at 44 sites nationwide to a storage facility in Utah.

"Keep in mind, we've got to fund a national program," he said.

Legislator Charles M. Swanick, D-Town of Tonawanda, stressed that there needs to be real input from the community.

"Unless there is a true review of options by others 'outside of the DOE, we'll end up in the same situation we had before," he said.

"I hope consideration is given to the neighbors of this thing," said town resident Edmund Koval.

The move by DOE to take its recommendation off the table derails a process that would have resulted in a DOE decision on the cleanup by next fall.

It is still not clear exactly what happens next, said Guimond, who noted the DOE will open a dialogue with the community to come up with a more inclusive process and a new timetable.

Those who spoke during public hearings or sent in comments on the original DOE recommendation will probably not get responses, Guimond said. Almost 650 comments were received.

Under the old process, the DOE would have had to answer each one before making a final record of decision. Guimond said that is no longer necessary, although he promised concerns would be addressed during the new analysis.



***The U.S. Department of Energy  
Will Hold an Availability Session for  
the Tonawanda, New York Sites***

**Wednesday, April 20, 1994  
4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the new  
DOE Public Information Center  
810 Sheridan Dr., Tonawanda  
(across the street from Sheridan Park)**

Representatives of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) are holding an informal public information session in order to answer any questions that you might have about the environmental cleanup of four radioactively contaminated sites in Tonawanda. Interested members of the public are invited to attend.

DOE has responsibility for these sites under its Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP). For more information, please call the DOE Public Information Center at (716) 871-9660.

# A welcome turnaround on a local uranium legacy

## *Get atomic-project waste out of Tonawanda*

**T**HE U.S. Department of Energy's "preferred alternative" for dealing with radioactive contamination in four places in the Town of Tonawanda turned out to be no one else's preference. So the department has wisely pulled back to re-examine the issue.

New technology may make the next answer acceptable to area politicians and citizens who rightly challenged the department's initial conclusions during a period of time allowed for public comment.

At issue is what to do about low-level radioactive wastes from uranium processing by the Linde Air Products Corp. during development of the atomic bomb in the renowned Manhattan Project. The locations are all in the industrial west end of the town.

The waste — officially described as "low-grade uranium ore tailings" — is hardly the hottest. A separation process has lowered its radioactivity. If inhaled or eaten, it could cause cancer, but it does not cause radiation sickness. Still, it has a half-life measured in billions of years. It's not the sort of thing people want in their back yards.

The department's elaborate study looked at six alternatives and wound up preferring storage at one of the four Tonawanda locations. Most of the waste would be dug up and put in a single spot encapsulated in a clay cell with a long-term life expectancy and with maintenance for as long as 1,000 years.

For local people, the overwhelming preference is to get the waste out of Tonawanda. For good reasons, that's the right an-

swer. Heavily populated Tonawanda should not be the location of a containment cell that might fail in the face of acts of nature, climate changes or human malfeasance during the many generations it must function properly.

Furthermore, the locations are near the Niagara River, magnifying the consequences of a mishap. Finally, the town has plans to develop the waterfront with housing, marinas and various commercial uses. Radioactive waste nearby won't help.

Fortunately, there is a licensed commercial disposal facility in a lightly populated location in Clive, Utah, that would be willing to receive the waste. The sticking point from the federal point of view is the cost — \$59 million for on-site storage versus \$201 million for rail shipment to Utah. But the overall federal cost projections for cleaning up 44 old radioactive sites throughout the country have enough leeway to handle the additional costs.

It's also fortunate that department officials are now talking about new technology that might be able to reduce the volume of radioactive waste at the Tonawanda locations by 65 percent. There would be less to transport to Utah, presumably making that alternative more attractive. The reduction technology is to be tested in New Jersey before being applied to the Tonawanda clean-up.

For the moment, the news is good. The department has turned away from on-site storage. That change is the first step toward a better way of dealing with Tonawanda's unwelcome legacy from World War II.

## METROPOLITAN NEWS

# Tonawanda waste site plans shelved

*U.S. Energy Dept. tables proposal for consolidation of four existing N-dumps*

By BARBARA O'BRIEN  
News Staff Reporter

The U.S. Department of Energy no longer is considering consolidating nuclear waste from four Manhattan Project sites in the town of Tonawanda at one location in the town.

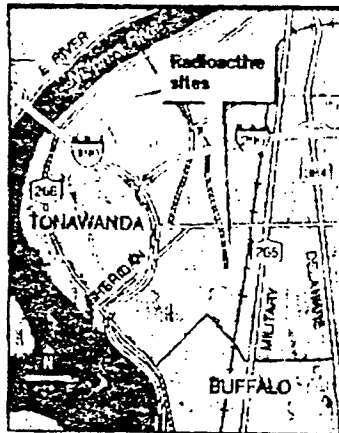
The department instead will re-examine the alternatives initially developed in cleaning up the four sites.

Thomas P. Grumbly, assistant secretary for the DOE's Office of Environmental Management, told Rep. John J. LaFalce, D-Town of Tonawanda, of the agency's decision Thursday to suspend the consolidation plan.

"DOE has decided to take the proposed on-site remediation plan for the Tonawanda wastes totally off the table," LaFalce said. "This reopening is total, and DOE has promised to solicit broad community input in examining all alternatives."

The decision and the plan to re-examine the alternatives will be outlined at a meeting at 4 p.m. Wednesday at the DOE's public information center, 530 Sheridan Drive.

LaFalce also said Grumbly also told him that the National Academy of Sciences will conduct an independent review of the DOE's plan to cap radioactive residues currently stored at the Niagara Falls Sewage Site in Lewiston.



Buffalo News

The DOE has suspended the installation of the long-term cap.

"It's a step in the right direction," said Town of Tonawanda Supervisor Carl J. Calabrese. "It's exactly the kind of help we needed from Rep. LaFalce."

Calabrese, who wants the waste removed from the town, said he is convinced any plan to leave it there "would be a huge detriment to develop our waterfront."

LaFalce was criticized publicly last month by Calabrese and Erie County Legislator Charles M. Swanick, D-Kennett, for "inactivity" on the issue.

Swanick and Calabrese sent a letter to Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary, claiming that the study was a "process with a predetermined result."

"I would think the public statement may have had some impact," Calabrese said. "I'm pleased if it did."

But LaFalce is convinced the quiet approach is responsible.

"They provide convincing evidence that quiet, persistent, behind-the-scenes communication and reasoning can get the government's attention," he said.

The low-level radioactive waste is a legacy of the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb during World War II. Uranium was processed here for Manhattan Project research in other parts of the country.

Four Town of Tonawanda sites now contain an estimated 8,000 tons of the radioactive wastes: the Sewage Industrial Landfill, two old Ashland refinery properties and the former Linde Air Products Corp. plant.

A five-year DOE technical study recommended combining the materials into one low-level radioactive waste storage facility on River Road in the town.

Residents, the town, Erie County and the state Department of Environ-

mental Conservation oppose leaving the waste in the town. Residents want it sent to a licensed facility in Utah.

LaFalce said shortly after the DOE recommended permanent storage of the approximately 350,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil in the town last November, he questioned that solution with DOE officials.

He said the DOE study does not adequately address a number of health-related issues, the potential migration of contaminants to the nearby Niagara River or the town's waterfront plans.

The assistant secretary agreed to analyze the issues raised by LaFalce, consider implementing innovative technologies to reduce the amount of waste and analyze the cost of removing that reduced waste, LaFalce said.

The Lewiston storage contains soils contaminated by low-level radioactive materials during the Manhattan Project and residues of uranium processing.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the state departments of Health and Environmental Conservation disagree with the Energy Department on its proposal to permanently store the residues at Lewiston.

A public meeting will be held at 4 p.m. Thursday at the site at 1397 Fletcher Road, Lewiston, to gather comments and explain the role of the National Academy of Sciences.