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## Lewiston radioactive waste site proposed

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A federal consultant has recommended the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works in Lewiston be turned into a disposal center for radioactive wastes.

According to a report by Bechtel National Inc. to the U.S. Department of Energy, the LOOW site on Pletcher Road would be used for disposal of radioactive wastes from other parts of the state.

An additional possibility would be to import radioactive wastes from Ohio, New Jersey and Massachusetts, the report states.

"It obviates the need for establishing a new disposal site, (and) it provides a solution to waste management needs in New

York," Bechtel concluded in the May report, which was obtained this week by the Niagara Gazette.

Bechtel of Oak Ridge, Tenn., said the federal government's investment in the regional disposal center could reach \$142 million, with at least another \$30 million needed to stabilize radioactive wastes already on the property.

Edward Delaney, acting deputy director of the energy department's waste management program, on Tuesday called Bechtel's recommendation "tentative and based upon establishing the suitability of the site."

Delaney said the energy department would not make any final decisions on the recommendation until sometime next year and only after Bechtel provides more information on available alternatives.

"We want people to know we aren't ar-

bitrarily doing this without a great deal of consideration," he said.

The LOOW site has been used since 1944 for the storage and disposal of radioactive research and production materials from the government's World War II Manhattan Project.

The Manhattan Project was the program that led to the development of the first atomic bomb.

The 191-acre site contains about 16,000 tons of radiation-contaminated material, including uranium oxide and radium.

Bechtel said the LOOW site would make an ideal disposal area for other Manhattan Project wastes that have contaminated properties throughout the Northeast.

"It is logical," Delaney said, "although it may not appear logical to the residents of the immediate area."

If the conversion is approved by the fed-

eral government, it would commit more than 1,000 acres of the site — used now and in the past for ordnance works — to waste disposal.

The original ordnance plant complex — used briefly during World War II to manufacture munitions — covered 7,500 acres in the towns of Lewiston and Porter. Most of the land was sold by the federal government prior to 1970.

SCA Chemical Services Inc. of Porter operates a hazardous waste disposal center on former LOOW land. Modern Landfill Inc. has proposed using another portion of the property on the site to construct an industrial landfill.

Federal energy officials have considered removing all wastes from Lewiston. But Bechtel said the dangers of transporting the radioactive material — and the fact that no other disposal areas exist in

this area of the country — make such a possibility unlikely.

"Decontamination, (safety) certification, and release (of ordnance property) for unrestricted use is the least favorable disposition scenario," Bechtel said in its report.

Energy officials said a Belgian company, Union Miniere du Haut Katanga, owns about 60 percent of the existing radioactive residues. Recent negotiations have centered around the transfer of ownership to the federal government.

The Belgian materials, primarily low-grade uranium ores, have been stored in Lewiston under a 25-year agreement that expires on July 1, 1983.

Bechtel said it intends to begin phase two of the study, which involves development of specific plans for the conversion.