

# DOE: LOOW decision not up to us

By DON DEPERRO  
Gazette Staff Writer

LEWISTON — The federal Department of Energy official who manages the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works said it will be up to the state or the federal government — not the DOE — to decide whether the LOOW site is developed into a regional waste repository.

"Policy makers are separate from us," said DOE Director of Technical Services Division E. Lea Keller. "Our responsibility is to take policy and translate it into action."

Keller said the DOE does not advocate developing the site for a regional waste repository, as other DOE officials have said. But he would not rule out that possibility because of what other state or federal legislative bodies may determine.

"Our immediate plans are to improve the quality of storage at the site for the next two years," he said. But a decision

to bring wastes from other areas for storage here "would have to be initiated by other interests, like the states," he added.

And before any decision is made — no matter who makes it — it cannot be implemented until a series of tests under the National Environmental Policy Act are completed, Keller said.

Included as part of the NEPA test is a state environmental impact statement, currently being compiled by Bechtel National Inc., the DOE's consultant at the LOOW site. Bechtel also is responsible for carrying out work at the Pletcher Road location.

Keller said he has not been notified about a meeting scheduled for Tuesday at Town Hall during which residents and local, state, federal and DOE officials are expected to discuss the future of the 191-acre site.

The DOE, he said, currently is studying a "family of options" for the site, ranging

from "leaving wastes there under suitable storage to decontaminating the site and transporting wastes elsewhere."

The future plans will be decided mainly on their cost-effectiveness, he said. When asked how cost-effective the LOOW site is, Keller responded, "Cost effective? That's a good site."

"But there are technical and institutional questions that we first must deal with," he added.

Keller said the LOOW site "would be considered" for a regional waste repository if New York State officials wanted that possibility investigated.

"Ninety-seven percent of the radioactive wastes in New York State are already there," he said. "When you talk about that being increased that would only be by 3 percent."

"If further use of that site is going to happen it would result from other sources — not the DOE."

Keller was asked if one of those other

"sources" is the state.

"That could occur," he said. "I'm not saying it would occur, I'm only saying it is a possibility."

"You may be cutting off six cancers instead of one," he said in reference to the other radioactive waste sites in the state.

In a related matter, Franklin E. Coffman, DOE acting director, office of terminal waste disposal and remedial action, office of nuclear energy, said a letter from his staff may have been misinterpreted.

Coffman said a Nov. 22 letter from John E. Baublitz "attempted to address the specific questions and concerns expressed in the individual inquiries."

"Specifically, the DOE has not accepted the recommendations in the Bechtel preliminary draft report, and has directed Bechtel to terminate further study of the use of the site as a regional disposal site."

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