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CLEANING UP In Lewiston, Manhattan Project cleanup to start

By Alan Flippen
The Associated Press

BUFFALO —The final cleanup of one of the nation's oldest nuclear waste sites, where waste from the original Manhattan Project is stored, will get under way this week, an official.

The last phase of the \$40 million cleanup involves permanently burying 3,500 cubic yards of contaminated soil in a storage area.

When the work is complete, in about six to eight weeks, it will conclude a 10-year effort to clean up a radioactive waste site that was opened in 1944, said William Seay, deputy director of the U.S. Energy Department's former sites restoration division.

"We'll revert to basically what we call a caretaker status," Seay said by telephone from his office in Oak

Ridge, Tenn. "The Department of Energy will give that site perpetual care."

The 191-acre site is part of the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works in Lewiston. It was intended as a TNT factory during World War II, but the federal government decided instead to use it to store waste from the effort to develop an atomic bomb.

Not all waste from the project was shipped to Lewiston. Some of the companies that got Manhattan Project contracts from the government kept the wastes and disposed of them on their own, Seay said.

Most of the waste buried at Lewiston is slag from uranium ore processing. By today's standards, it would be considered low-level waste. An environmental impact statement completed in the early 1980s found that the waste contained only about 875 to 880 curies of radioactivity.