

Back to square one?

Capping landfill is on hold

By Mary Wozniak
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The energy department has stopped the process leading to putting a final cap on 255,000 cubic yards of radioactive material buried in Lewiston at the Niagara Falls Storage Site.

Area residents want to make sure it doesn't start up again.

Timothy Henderson, president of Residents Organized for Lewiston-Porter's Environment, sees the fact that the energy department has turned to the National Academy of Sciences to review the adequacy of the department's plan as hopeful. They wouldn't go to all this trouble if they just intended to dismiss the academy's findings out of hand, he reasons.

But R. Nils Olsen Jr., attorney for ROLE, wants to make sure that the academy won't just rubber stamp the energy department's proposed final cap.

He quizzed Ronald E. Kirk on the makeup and independence of the panel at an "availability session," or open house, held there Thursday. Kirk is the energy department's site manager for the Lewiston site.

Kirk said he didn't know who from the academy would be on the panel. The energy department has asked the panel to review other department actions in the past, he said. Kirk said he thought most of the scientists



David McLain/*Niagara Gazette*

EXPLAINING A POINT: Ronald E. Kirk, right, site manager for the Niagara Falls Storage Site, talks to Stanley Thompson of Lewiston about energy department plans to put a final cap on radioactive material buried there. Thompson is a member of the Town of Lewiston Environmental Commission.

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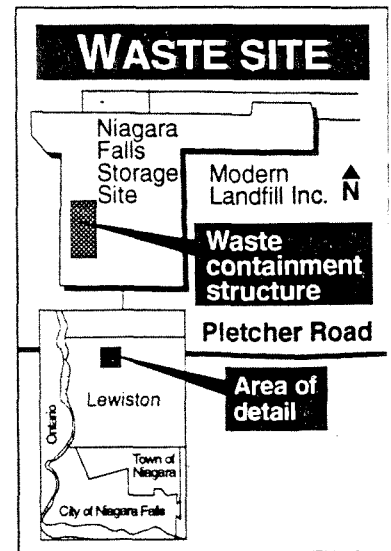
were connected to universities.

Olsen said the answers to his questions were not satisfactory. He wants to know exactly what relationship these scientists have to the energy department, whether they depend on government grants to do their research, or whether any are connected to nuclear industry. If they do, they're not exactly neutral, he said.

Any final decision on what to do with the site has to be open to public participation under the National Environmental Policy Act,

Olsen said. But Kirk said he was not sure what sort of public review, if any, under NEPA would take place after the academy finished their review.

The Environmental Protection Agency, state Department of Health and state Department of Environmental Conservation are all against the energy department's proposed plan. They say that the radioactive residue buried in Lewiston is of too high a level to be contained there using the lower standards the energy department wants to use.



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