

# Local

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES: THE ENVIRONMENT

# Landfills: Niagara's environmental legacy

County makes progress, but scars evident

By Teresa H. Sharp

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The Niagara County landscape has changed in the 25 years since the first Earth Day was celebrated, but for better or worse?

Landfills climb into the sky, but work progresses on cleaning up five of the county's six federal Superfund sites, with the one that started it all — Love Canal — nearly as entirely resettled as it can be.

There are six federal Superfund sites in Niagara County: Love Canal, the 102nd Street landfill, the S-Area landfill, the Hyde Park landfill, Niagara County Refuse site and Forest Glen.

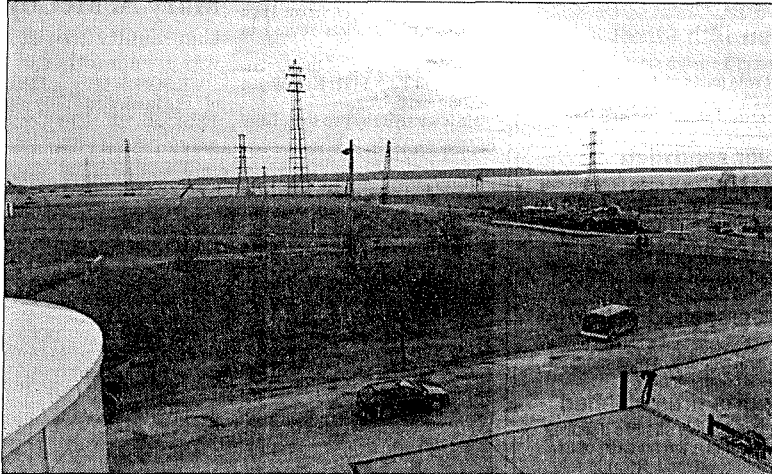
The state's only commercial hazardous waste landfill — located in Lewiston — gave up on incineration for 10 years in an historic agreement that allowed it to expand its landfill. But the long-term fate of the Niagara Falls Storage Site — the wartime storage facility for residues from the atom bomb project — remains in question.

"I hate the word 'containment,'" said Joan Gipp of Lewiston, a state representative to the Great Lakes Commission. "I don't believe there is any such thing. In Porter and Lewiston, there are 2,500 acres of land that man will never be able to use again. The term 'secure landfill' is an oxymoron. All contaminants ultimately migrate."

"It comes down to dollars," said Joseph Urso of Niagara Falls, a member of the Niagara River Anglers Association. "We'll never get back to the way we were. There are abandoned sites all around us. That land in Lewiston and Porter was prime agricultural land."

Frank Schieppati, Niagara Falls' director of environmental services, noted that when it comes to removing materials "it's always to someone else's backyard. A lot of this is about property values. People don't mind having the site there, but don't want it to be capped there. They're not concerned until there is remediation."

Arthur V. Lynnworth, manager of Occidental Chemical Corp.'s Niagara Plant on Buffalo Avenue, said, "We need better awareness of ultimate land use. We need some preserved land and some



Dan Cappellazzo/Niagara Gazette

**CLEANUP:** Work at the S-Area landfill should be completed by the spring of 1998, at a final cost of \$50 million. The 8-acre landfill is owned by Occidental Chemical Corp. and located at its Buffalo Avenue plant, formerly Hooker Chemical and Plastics Corp., which dumped 63,000 tons of chemical processing waste from 1947-61 and other wastes and debris until 1975. The landfill lies atop land reclaimed from the Niagara River.

✓ **Wednesday** Grading the environment.

✓ **Thursday** How clean is the area water?  
Is it safe to drink?

Joe Ognibene on the state of fishing.  
Zebra mussels and ruffe are unwelcome immigrants.  
Earth Day events.

✓ **Friday**

An update of Niagara County's six Superfund sites.  
Recycling — do we practice what we preach?

✓ **Saturday — Earth Day**

Is the air we breathe better now?  
A special report on Kids and the Environment,  
plus the Environment on the Internet.

✓ **Sunday**

Lewiston Girl Scouts clean the village.

Working toward a better environment.  
Area residents view parks as essential  
— Living, 1E

■ **Today**

How has the County's landscape changed?

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES: THE ENVIRONMENT



EARTH DAY  
25 years

economic development areas."

Some decisions have already been made; some are yet to come.

The Niagara Falls Storage Site is a 191-acre dump on Pletcher Road in Lewiston where the U.S. Department of Energy buried 22,000 tons of radioactive waste, beginning in 1944 with the Manhattan Project. It has been estimated by the DOE that it could cost between \$15 million and \$100 million to clean up the site.

The DOE is awaiting an evaluation of the site from the National Academy of Sciences as to whether it feels the current site is adequate to protect residents for 10,000 years, according to Ronald Kirk, the DOE's site manager.

"There are indications they'll be delayed," Kirk said of the academy. "But the final report is due this spring. They haven't

given us any indication which way they'll lean (contain or move the contaminants). But they haven't given us any indication there's any immediate health issues."

Lewiston — and adjoining Porter — also are home to the state's sole hazardous waste dump site — CWM Chemical Services Inc. According to Bidjan Rostami, an environmental engineer with the state Department of Environmental Conservation, CWM has nine "secure, closed landfills" and a 10th "is still open, but it will be capped in another month."

In addition, CWM received a permit this past year for a new active landfill — dubbed Residual Management Unit-1 — which will be in operation for eight years.

The deal was struck as part of an historic agreement between CWM — and the municipalities

directly involved and a citizen's group interested in staving off CWM's plans for incineration.

After lengthy negotiations, an accord also was reached between the Town of Lewiston and Modern Landfill Inc. last month that allows Modern to expand its landfill to a height of 95 feet, but will shut it down in 16 years. In exchange, the town receives free collection and recycling services, a host fee, and Modern finances the closing of the old town landfill.

"We're just moving the toxins from one natural resource to another," said Lewiston's Gipp. "From the Niagara River to landfills to incineration, we're just shifting it around. I'm concerned about communities selling their natural resources for money ... You can't eat or drink money."