

Superfund projects under way in Niagara County.

Dump sites being contained

CLEANING UP: *Work is progressing to clean up Niagara County's hazardous waste sites.*

By Eugena Sherman

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Behind the 102nd Street sign off Buffalo Avenue lies what looks like mounds of white sand that might be seen on the shores of a Caribbean island.

But the mounds of material are what's being used to help contain the closed landfill where more than 111,000 tons of chemicals and residual materials were dumped from the

1940s to the 1970s.

Containment of the site is "well on its way," said site project manager Paul Olivo of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The containment project is expected to be completed by 1998, he said.

In addition, cleanup of three other federal Superfund sites in Niagara County, where hundreds of thousands of tons of chemical and other wastes are buried, are progressing and will be approaching the final cleanup phase in the coming years. As a result, the area could be on the path to cleaning up its reputation, labeled by some as the nation's hazardous waste dump.

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"We're always focusing on the negative," said Gloria Sosa, EPA project manager for containment at the Hyde Park Landfill and Forest Glen, two other Superfund sites in the cleanup stages. "The area is being cleaned up so much and so much has improved, and that's not always publicized as when the bad news occurs. There's a lot of progress, and it would be good if people were aware of that."

102nd St. Landfill

Trucks and cranes are busy six days a week, moving, piling and excavating on the site that abuts the Niagara River.

When construction is completed in 1998, the entire 22-acre site will be capped and will tower about 35 feet above the river, Olivo said.

Then pumps installed on top of the landfill will absorb the contaminants from within the landfill, creating an inward gradient across a (slurry) barrier wall, and stop contamination from seeping into the river, Olivo said.

"A finite amount (of contamination) can go through a slurry wall, and that's why we have the pumps," he said.

Olivo said the contamination collected should be a "relatively small amount" compared to other large sites, such as the Hyde Park Landfill. Contaminants will be treated offsite, presumably at Occidental Chemical Corp.'s Buffalo Avenue plant, he said.

The landfill will be covered with a clean fill, transported from Love Canal, and gypsum, a chalk-like substance that will give it more strength and more resilience. The gypsum has been piled in mounds at the site. A synthetic lining will be placed over the fill and topped with soil and grass.

"When it's completed, you'll see something like Love Canal," Olivo said, noting shrubbery and trees will be planted around the edge of the site, which also will be fenced.

In addition to the cap on top of the site, a clay layer lines the bottom of the landfill, and that has prevented contamination from seeping into the bedrock. Tests

have shown there is no site-related contamination in the bedrock, which is not the case with other sites, Olivo said.

Besides the landfill itself, inside the river's embayment is a coffer dam, which consists of a compact dirt wall, like a dike, that protrudes about six feet above the river. It's designed to trap contaminated sediments on the river floor. The coffer dam stretches 1,600 feet in a U-shape and stops at the site's perimeters. Water within the dam will be pumped, leaving behind the sediments, which will be dredged and placed on top of the landfill before it is capped.

Once the sediments are removed, clean fill will be placed on the river's bottom.

Hyde Park Landfill

Site project manager Gloria Sosa said the cleanup work is 99 percent complete.

Additional pumping wells were installed at the 15-acre site where 80,000 tons of waste was dumped from 1953 to 1975.

The following clipping is not about FUSRAP but is included because it provides relevant information on FUSRAP sites or issues.

The wells will establish an inward slope within the landfill to capture ground water contaminants in fractured bedrock beneath the site and to keep it from migrating offsite. Sosa said she is confident that this year's additional round of pumping wells will create the slope necessary to keep contaminants from migrating offsite.

Site construction should be completed in December. Then the system will be tested and tweaked if necessary, Sosa said.

Once the EPA is confident the design is working, a report will be released on the remedy and providing data on its effectiveness.

The entire design consists of a clay covering and wells that pump contaminated ground water from fractured bedrock beyond and beneath the site and into a collection system at the site, where it is treated. The non-aqueous phase liquids — or impermeable contaminants — are treated at Occidental's Buffalo Avenue plant, where they will be incinerated. In addition, another 40 or so monitoring wells have been placed along the site's perimeter to make sure

The public then gets a chance to comment on the plan, which can be modified if there are substantial concerns. A public meeting probably will be held in November. At that time, the EPA will contact the companies it thinks are responsible for the dump and ask them to help pay for the cleanup.

Regardless of whether the companies commit, Sosa said she expects a decision to be released by January 1997.

"If no one ever comes forward, the EPA will sue for cost recovery," Sosa said.

Niagara County Refuse (Witmer Road dump)

The 50-acre landfill that was operated by the Niagara County Refuse District from 1968 to 1976 contains industrial and municipal wastes. The closed site borders the city of North Tonawanda and the Town of Wheatfield.

The 12 major potentially responsible parties include Booth Oil, Browning Ferris Industries, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Industrial Holdings Corp., Modern Disposal Services, Occidental Chemical Corp. and Olin Chemical Corp. Four municipalities also are parties: Niagara Falls, Niagara County, North Tonawanda and Wheatfield.

The landfill design should be completed by the end of this year and will be released to the public. EPA site project manager Michael Negrelli said work should begin next spring and be completed by fall 1998.

Negrelli said the project will contain and cap the waste, which will be surrounded by a impermeable synthetic barrier wall. Like the 102nd Street Landfill, clay lines the bottom of the refuse site.

Unlike the other sites, pumping wells will not be used. Instead, a water drainage system similar to a municipal storm sewer will convey water into a collection pipe and then into a sanitary sewer line, probably in North Tonawanda.

Once the project is built in 1998, the site will require minimum maintenance and inspections, Negrelli said. There will be periodic testing of ground water wells.

Negrelli estimates the cost to contain the site to be \$20 million.