

Residents turn out for briefing on site

CONCERNED:

Residents were updated on contamination at Lake Ontario sites near Lewiston and Porter.

By Ron Churchill
Niagara Gazette

YOUNGSTOWN — Nearly a hundred concerned residents Tuesday night heard an update on what the government is doing to clean up chemical and radioactive contamination in the towns of Lewiston and Porter.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers organized the forum to keep residents posted on the government's investigation and cleanup efforts at the Former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works and the radioactive Niagara Falls Storage Site, which is located on the Ordnance land parcel.

Ray Pilon, the Army Corps project manager for both sites, said there is no threat from the 191-acre Niagara Falls Storage Site, but that chemical contaminants have been identified in several locations within the former Ordnance Works.

The most immediate proposed action will affect two areas — a drum trench and a burn pit — located on the portion of the Ordnance Works owned by Chemical Waste Management. That part of the cleanup will cost an estimated \$6 million, Pilon said.

Additionally, a building on the Niagara Falls Storage Site recently was cleared of radioactive material because officials were concerned the structure might collapse, Pilon said.

There is good news about the recently discovered chemical

contamination, he said at the Tuesday meeting at the Lewiston Senior Center, a building just down Pletcher Road from the radioactive part of the site.

"We have found no evidence that the contamination is migrating off-site," he said.

With regard to the radioactive material at the Niagara Falls Storage Site, "Whether the stuff stays or moves, is the big question," Pilon said.

Those types of answers may not come for about four years, after several stages of investigation — including on-site testing and historical tracking — have been completed. For example, the radioactive material accumulated while the facility was being used by the Manhattan Engineer District for storing radioactive residues and wastes from uranium ore processing conducted during development of the atomic bomb.

But radioactive residues and wastes also were brought from other sites for storage until the late 1950s, according to the Corps of Engineers.

The focus of the meeting turned to the possibility of contamination of soil or groundwater at sites like the nearby Lewiston-Porter school complex. Pilon said additional investigation would be performed regarding the school.

Attorney Ronald L. Kuis distributed 100 copies of a health screening survey — complete with self-addressed envelopes — for residents to fill out and return to his office in Pittsburgh. He said he was performing the study for Rochester attorneys representing John Syms and the Somerset Group Inc., which owns property adjacent to the Ordnance Works.