

Ordnance site funding on hold

Community board will offer input on restoration, cleanup of 7,500-acre area

By Ann McBride

Niagara Gazette

LEWISTON — Although some cleanup is under way at the 50-year-old former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site, a newly appointed advisory board was told Tuesday a last-minute glitch in funding may hold up further remediation.

Ray Pilon, the project manager for the U.S. Corps of Engineers, told the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) he found out last week federal funds had been diverted.

Pilon said he expected to receive \$500,000, which would have been used for more sampling and cleanup called for in the project's second phase. If no funds are there during this cycle, the project will be in line for more money Oct. 1.

"We can't make any promises," he told the board and 20 audience members, "but priority is pretty high for this area."

Although the site encompasses 7,500 acres in the towns of Porter and Lewiston, the U.S. Department of Defense used just 2,500 acres of it for the manufacturing of TNT. This is the area that contains

chemical contamination in the soil and ground water. The other 5,000 acres were used as a buffer zone and since have been sold to private land owners. The Army manufactured TNT for nine months in 1942 and 1943 and at that time, the site encompassed a power plant, a hospital, a fire department, and water and wastewater treatment systems.

The first phase of the remediation — which carries an overall pricetag of \$55 million — has been completed. It involved an extensive history search of the property and laboratory analysis and sampling. Over the past two years, Pilon said \$2½ million has been spent on the cleanup, which involved the removal of asbestos from property owned by the Somerset Group and work now under way by Radian International LLC of Maryland on property owned by Chemical Waste Management.

Dave Wilder of Radian said he has had work crews of between 10 and 20 people working at the site since March. They are responsible for the environmental cleanup of a TNT pipeline and chemical waste sewer lines and the demolition of a wastewater treatment plant. He said he expects the work to be done by September.

Board members expressed concern about the status of the 190-acre Niagara Falls Storage Site, which is a part of the former Lake Ontario site, but falls under a separate federal program. The site is a

long-term but not permanent solution to the storage of radioactive wastes from the processing of uranium ore. Pilon put the price tag for the ultimate cleanup of that site at \$300 million.

The advisory board appointed R. Nils Olsen Jr., a Youngstown resident and member of the Lewiston-Porter Board of Education, co-chairman. Olsen, a longtime environmental activist, will work with the Corps in coordinating meetings and ensuring all members are kept informed about activities at the site.

The board's next meeting is scheduled

for 7 p.m. Sept. 15 in the Primary Building on the Lewiston-Porter campus.

Representing the various government entities are: Stephen M. Yaksich, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Michael Basile, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Kent Johnson, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; Paul Dicky, Niagara County Health Department; Neil Patterson Jr., Tuscarora Indian Nation; Jim Langlois, Town of Lewiston board member; and Town of Porter resident Charles Lamb.

Representing the land owners surrounding the site area are: Rebecca Zayatz, Chemical Waste Management; Gary Smith, vice president of Modern Landfill; Walter Polka, Superintendent of Lewiston-Porter Central School District; John Syms, Somerset Group; and Bruce Mero of the U.S. Air Force.

Community members include Olsen, Lawrence Brennan of Youngstown; Daniel Seranni Jr. of Youngstown; Thomas Freck of Ransomville; Theresa Mudd of Lewiston; Martin Hodgins of Lewiston; Ed Lilly, member of the Lewiston-Porter Board of Education and Lewiston Civic Association; Tim Henderson of Residents Organized for Lewiston-Porter Environment (ROLE); Nona McQuay of ROLE; William Angus of Greater Lewiston Business and Professional Association and Clyde Johnston Jr. of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 463.



Niagara Gazette