

# Corps calls site no worry

## First phase of study says site in Lewiston is radioactive, but not dangerous

By Lisa Marie Danish

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PORTER — A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study released Wednesday said the Niagara Falls Storage Site in Lewiston presents little danger.

The site was used for radioactive waste storage from the Department of Defense's Manhattan project until the late-1950s.

Judith Leithner, project engineer, told the Restoration Advisory Board of community members and agencies that the first phase of testing by the Corps found radioactive material — including total uranium, as well as

poly-aromatic hydrocarbons (like benzo(a)pyrene) — and one kind of PCB in the soils and sediments of the 190-acre site. The Corps found no pesticides or toxic metals in 69 surface soil samples, 78 subsurface soil samples and 39 sediment samples.

Leithner said the radioactive elements in the soil of certain areas were not worrisome.

"We will clean those up — but frankly, I walk over those spots and I don't tremble at all.

"In the next phase we will be doing further tests to determine the source of the radioactivity," she said. "This is

probably naturally occurring radioactivity, but we don't just assume that."

Leithner said the second phase will provide the Corps with a geophysical study, which will map the lay of the land and its component materials. She was looking forward to knowing more about the ground around a 10-acre containment structure completed in 1991 which contains radioactive wastes and residues. The structure was sealed with a temporary cap and Leithner said it would be unsafe for crews to break the cap to determine exactly what is in the structure.

Advisory board member William

Angus asked Leithner if the study would help determine the remaining life of the temporary cap.

"When it was created the estimate was 25 to 50 years, and 25 years would be up in 2011," Leithner said. "Since there's not much known about the base of the structure, I'm not comfortable with that, and I want to find out now."

The Corps hopes to release a draft report with a risk assessment in November. The risk assessment could recommend that the cap be made permanent or that the structure should be dug up and treated.