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LEWISTON

Facility may hold radioactive human parts

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LEWISTON — Reports that radioactive human body parts were buried at a secret Army research facility here during World War II will be investigated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Area residents voiced their latest fears about the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works (LOOW) at a meeting Wednesday night of the Army Corps' Restoration Advisory Board, which was formed last year to clean up the site. The quarterly meeting was held at the Lewiston-Porter Central School, less than a mile from the wartime site that was part of the Manhattan Project to develop the atomic bomb.

Contaminated nuclear waste from these projects was buried in the Niagara Falls Storage Site, a 191-acre section of the sprawling 7,500-acre Lake Ontario Ordnance Works.

The Army set aside a portion of the Niagara Falls Storage Site as the Rochester Burial Site to contain the remains of dogs, cats, rabbits and other animals used in radiation experiments at the University of Rochester during in the

1940s and 1950s.

The radioactive animal carcasses were buried there 50 years ago, but it was only in the past three months that the Army Corps began to address the matter.

"There is no question that experiments involving the injection of plutonium into animals and unwitting human subjects were done in Rochester in the 1940s and 1950s," said Louis H. Ricciuti, a director of Citizens Campaign Against Nuclear Exposure.

The human experimentation in Rochester has been documented in a new book by Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Eileen Welsome called "The Plutonium Files."

"There is a high probability that in addition to the animal remains, the grisly possibility exists that human body parts were also buried in Lewiston," Ricciuti told the stunned audience.

"That would be surprising," said Judith S. Leithner, the Army Corps' project manager for the Niagara Falls Storage Site.

When Ricciuti said he had documents to back up his belief that contaminated human organs were buried there, Leithner asked for copies of the docu-

ments and said the Corps would investigate.

"We're looking very carefully at the whole site, and that's why it's taking so long," Leithner said.

The site straddles the towns of Lewiston and Porter in northwestern Niagara County. Today it is surrounded by affluent homes and townhouses and is less than a mile from the Lewiston-Porter schools with a combined enrollment of 2,500 students.

Linda Shaw, an attorney representing John Syms who owns property in the area, criticized the Corps for failing to honor its commitment at a previous meeting to provide full data at Wednesday's meeting on the levels of contamination and the health hazards.

"You started poking holes in the ground last June, and there's still no data. These people are entitled to know if they're at risk," said Shaw, referring to the area residents.

The Army Corps has a \$4 million "wish list" of projects to clean up in the area, but "no idea" if they can ever get the money to complete the job, said LOOW project manager Mary Kay Foley.