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Advisory group reforming on ordnance site

By Susan Mikula Campbell

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A new community-based group is being formed to replace the Army Corps of Engineers' advisory board on the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works project in Lewiston and Porter.

Last June's meeting of the Restoration Advisory Board was cancelled and members received a letter indicating budget cuts were at fault.

However, the March meeting — filled with anger and frustration by community members attending — also pointed out the need for change.

The Army Corps eventually hired an independent researcher, Sue Senecah of Syracuse University, to interview community members, advisory board members and Army Corps participants to come up with a solution.

She met with study participants both Dec. 5 and Thursday to begin working out the structure of a new group.

Ann Roberts, vice chairman of Porter's Residents for Responsible Government, and a member of the group's temporary steering committee, said the structure should be ready by the beginning of March, she said.

"Shortly after that, we should be in a position to have a public meeting," she said.

Michele Hope, Buffalo District public affairs specialist, said the Advisory Board meetings were too formal.

"The public comment period was just a small part of the agenda and it never was enough," she said.

Meetings, which required experts, video equipment and a court reporter, also were costing about \$1,000, she said.

Tim Henderson, president of Lewiston's Residents Organized for Lewiston Porter Environment, was a member of

the Restoration Advisory Board. Serious questions were raised at meetings, but most of the time answers took at least three months, since the meetings were only held quarterly, he said.

"You could feel the frustration at the last meeting," he said.

LOOW was the site of Department of Defense activities during World War II and a storage site for radioactive waste from the Manhattan Project. Environmental concerns have arisen not only about the 2,500 acres actively used by the government, but about possible contamination in a 5,000-acre buffer zone.