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Sentinel

## RRG Environmental Summit set for June 22

Coming off last month's contentious Lew-Port public hearing on the state Department of Environmental Conservation's siting plan, news comes of an Environmental Summit, with open public dialogue, to be held on Tuesday, June 22 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Lew-Port High School, 4601 Creek Road, in the auditorium.

The event will be moderated by Fred Caso.

"This is our second Environmental Summit to help provide answers and more complete information to citizens of the area," said Residents for Responsible Government Inc. President Vince Agnello. RRG is sponsoring the event.

Agnello explained that this will be the first time that the public will have a chance to get answers from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

"It will be an information opportunity for concerned residents to have an exchange on some very difficult and confusing topics," RRG's Vice President Tim Henderson said.

Four recent DEC hearings from February 2003 through May 2004 have resulted in zero feedback from the DEC.

"Up to now, they (DEC) have held hearings where they never provide answers, ask for clarification or show any interest," Henderson said. "They give the impression that they have made up their minds on all these issues that impact the health and safety of future generations in this area."

The format is intended to be open and comfortable to all. Question cards will help sequence speakers who then may asked their question at the microphone, or the moderator can read them if desired. RRG is also taking questions on their Web site, rrg-wny.org. In addition, RRG may have some local experts on the panel to address related topics.

RRG said this will be the true test of how a community can work openly with government

officials.

Henderson said that New York state has made a big point of stating that they intend to be a leader in the nation on "Environmental Justice" issues.

He notes that Environmental Justice is defined by the federal EPA as not overly burdening any group of people.

"New York state just held an EJ conference which I attended," Agnello said. "And they stated that the DEC wants to get out into the public eye and have two-way dialogues such as these. We are all on a learning curve, but I think it is exciting to be the first community to be able to test the process."

Agnello said one of RRG's goals is to provide an open forum so the public feels included in topics which impact health and safety of local residents. This dialogue will concentrate mostly on DEC topics, "because of their lack of response to the public in recent years."

RRG states the health topic will be more deeply explored at another public Environmental Summit later this fall.

Reference was made by RRG to the NYS Department of Health which proved statistically significant incidence of male cancers in the Ransomville area, down wind from the Chemical Waste Management site which regularly disturbs soil from the WWII Manhattan Project.

"Now, CWM is asking the town of Porter for an excavation permit to dig deeper into the soil which the federal government and DoH have restricted," Agnello said. "This is contrary to last week's U.S. Army Corps of Engineers public presentation showing that they found radioactive material on CWM's property. The Corps is qualified to dig, but CWM has no radiological material license or expertise. CWM's excavations is a further obstacle, and it generates more contamination and public concern."