

Offers comments on 'the bad neighbor'

Sitting through the public scoping sessions for Chemical Waste Management's proposed new landfill was just a harrowing experience. I mean, I love it here. I love the escarpment, the river, the lake, the villages, the people, the weather. The trouble is, CWM is my neighbor.

With neighbors, there are some things you can ignore, and some you can't. For five hours (and I left the second session early), I sat in the Lew-Port school auditorium and listened to a litany of things I can't ignore.

In case you missed the meetings, here are a few choice bits. Niagara County Department of Health maps show elevated rates of prostate and colorectal cancer in our communities, in a bull's eye pattern centered just downwind and downstream of the dump.

The trucks laden with hazardous waste that hurtle past my house, like all trucks, leak, roll over (remember last year's crash?), and spill their cancer-causing contents into our front yards – including the front yard of Lew-Port.

A New York State Department of Health order banning any digging on the CWM site, for the sensible reason that thousands of plutonium-injected carcasses from Manhattan project experiments are miscellaneously bur-

ied there, was violated by CWM for 20 years, until 2004. Other "residual" radioactive contamination on the site includes nuclear reprocessing waste and high activity radioactive waste from atom bomb production.

The nearly 3,000 students and employees of Lew-Port, people who spend large portions of their lives literally on the dump's western border as well as on the truck route, were not even considered as a population in the draft scoping document.

The document assures us that the dump is not in a fault zone, disputing both our own local experts at UB's Earthquake Center and a recent article in National Geographic, likening our earthquake risk to that of California. The site is supposedly safely underlain by solid clay – yet farmers have been irrigating their fields from wells in sand pockets in that clay for the better part of two centuries.

Many decision-makers – from Porter Town Board members to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation – have a direct stake in CWM's continued operation, creating an ugly potential conflict of interest that undermines the very permitting and review processes designed to protect us. Awake now? I sure am.

According to the U.S. Environmen-

tal Protection Agency, CWM's track record, and common sense, all landfills eventually leak. We now have one leaking hazardous waste dump in our community that we will have to deal with – forever.

Anyone under the impression that a legacy of wandering PCBs, dioxin and other poisons is good for the economy should have a chat with our neighbors in Niagara Falls. Have no doubt that for every cent we get from CWM today, our kids will be paying back a dollar. If they stay here – and if they don't get sick.

Right now, there is a bill on Governor Pataki's desk – bill A-11713 – that would prevent the siting of new hazardous waste dumps with potential to leak into the Great Lakes. That includes the new CWM dump.

If you care, give the governor a call at (518) 474-8390 and ask him to sign it, so we can all breathe a little easier.

The CWM situation exemplifies all that is wrong with the way we treat the land, the water and our own people. One leaking waste dump, one massive blight on our landscape, one polluter of our fresh water, one threat to our health, one blow to the future prosperity of our towns, ought to be enough. How can we consider allowing the construction of another?

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