

Ferry sets sail Sept. 17



Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Gary Burroughs (center) addresses the media Friday, as Youngstown Mayor Neil Riordan (right) and Clyde Burmaster, vice chairman of the Niagara County Legislature (left), look on. (photo by Larry Austin)

by Joshua Maloni

Local officials spearheading efforts to establish a permanent cross-border ferry will host a one-day promotional event to gauge interest in the project. On Saturday, Sept. 17, the Whirlpool Jet Boat will transport passengers from the Mayor Gary Burroughs and Youngstown Yacht Club dock to its counterpart on Melville Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake every half hour from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It will take between five and 10 minutes to cross the 2,000 feet of river water.

Clyde Burmaster, vice chairman of the Niagara County Legislature, announced the event as part of a press conference yesterday. He was joined by Youngstown Mayor Neil Riordan, Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Gary Burroughs and Burmaster called the ferry project, "A tremendous

Niagara air base appears to be saved

by Ralph Schwarz

After three-and-a-half months of anticipation, supporters of the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Base are breathing a collective sigh of relief as it appears that the facility will remain open.

A new recommendation proposed by the Base Alignment and Closure Commission early Friday afternoon would see the Niagara air base keep eight C-130 Hercules aircraft, as currently operated by the 914th Airlift Wing, and eight LC-130 air refueling tankers, as currently manned by the 107th Air Refueling Wing. The numbers are identical with the current air fleet maintained by the 914th Airlift Wing and the 107th Air Refueling Wing.

The original plans issued by the U.S. Department of Defense called for the closure of the installation and the transfer of its two units and their equipment to air bases in California, Texas and Kansas, respectively.

The new proposal, which came on the final day of the BRAC Commission's three-day deliberations in Virginia on the future of 33 U.S. military installations, was greeted with cheers by base supporters who gathered in the

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LOOW takes on a new chapter

by Terry Duffy (Part I)

For the past several decades, northern Niagara County residents have co-existed with a legacy which some to this day have termed an environmental nightmare.

Known back in the 1940s and early '50s as the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works, it comprised a 7,500-acre tract of lands in Lewiston which originally were devoted to farming until government seizure in 1942. It then saw a significant amount of activity linked to the Buffalo-Niagara Falls region's contribution to the national war effort during World War II, and later on, from a wide assortment of waste operations in following years.

Starting out life in 1942-43, first as a rather elaborate TNT manufacturing complex, up to roughly 1,500 interior acres of LOOW property went on to become an integral part of the Buffalo area's research and production activities related to the Manhattan Project in the war years, leading to the development of the atomic bombs which were dropped over Japan in August 1945.

Following that time these lands, primarily due to their ideal clay soil composition utility for land filling, became a popular Buffalo-Niagara Falls area option for a wide assortment of federal government, municipal, commercial and industrial waste disposal operations, some of which continue to this day.

Environmental Abuses

But as a result LOOW also fell victim to a wide range of environmental abuses, first from the radiation contamination attributed to the World War II-era Manhattan Project activities, then from post-war related government land filling in the '50s and '60s, and then from a mix of activities comprising both hazardous as well as municipal waste disposal operations which continue to present day.

Currently the lands include the 191-acre Niagara Falls Storage Site, a highly radioactive contaminated U.S. government facility managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the operations of Modern Corporation on the southern

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Just peachy...



Contestants for Peach Queen of the Lewiston Kiwanis Peach Festival recently gathered in Academy Park in the Village of Lewiston. The Peach Festival, centered around Niagara County's bountiful peach harvest, features a midway with more than 40 rides, many games of chance, all kinds of food and, of course, the famous peach shortcake. For the first time in many years, the shortcake will be made with Niagara County peaches. The popular event takes place at the park from Friday, Sept. 9 through Sunday, Sept. 11. The Peach Queen will be crowned in ceremonies starting at 8 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 11. Other festival highlights include opening ceremonies at 5 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 9; a 5K run and a parade on Saturday, Sept. 10; and selection of the winners for the Peach Blossom and Peach Fuzz contests. For more on the Peach Festival, see pages 8 and 9.

CWM studies follow DEC operating permit renewal

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Chemical Waste Management on its northern border, a Niagara Mohawk right-of-way in the middle, accidental and Army National Guard lands, and a mix of local, military and private properties.

It also comprises the Lewiston-Porter School district campus, a site which borders the far outer perimeters of the LOOW site on its eastern fringes on Creek Road. Despite the worries of any in the area concerned with health and safety issues, students and district staff from Lew-Port's location to the waste operations, many officials, particularly those from the Army Corps, have steadfastly denied any residual contamination link to the Lew-Port campus.

"LOOW activities never extended out that far," said Tom Papura of the Army Corps, who works at the NFFS site.

Inner LOOW Site Problems

However concerns dating from LOOW's World War II-era Manhattan Project activity, and particularly the later mix of now questionable disposal and incomplete clean-ups of radioactive materials, remain. Added to that are incomplete and oftentimes confusing government documentation of these clean-ups.

And that's where much of the area's environmental worries come into play. While both Modern as well as CWM strictly adhere to current standards and technologies for their respective waste disposal operations, unresolved problems, questions and concerns remain with respect to what was done earlier, particularly with respect to radiological contamination.

In a nutshell, today's remaining radiological issue at LOOW stems from the very wide variations in technologies employed in land filling operations which have changed

drastically from the 1940s to present day. What was viewed as acceptable procedures for the handling of radioactive waste back in the '40s, '50s and '60s for example, wouldn't even be considered today. But the results of those practices remain in various areas of the LOOW site.

Community Protests

And the concerns of the northern Niagara County community continue. Recent years have seen countless protests, citizens groups formed, community forums held, lawsuits brought, studies done, as well as a slew of local, county and state legislative and actual on-site responsive/remedial action.

It has also seen extensive coverage by the *Sentinel*, which first unearthed the radiological problems on CWM's lands back in 2003.

But that is not to say that there hasn't been any corrective action at LOOW. There indeed has. From the decades

of earlier US government clean-ups to current day monitoring and remediation work, much has and continues to be done in the LOOW area. In fact, much of the response by the Army Corps and CWM is very much attributed to the aforementioned years of community heat on this issue.

LOOW Today

This summer the *Sentinel* had opportunity to meet with the Army Corps and revisit the inner confines of the cordoned-off NFFS property, as well as discuss at length with CWM technical officials and their private contractors, just "what's what" with respect to current activities targeting radiation at both sites. In a nutshell, much of what the *Sentinel* has found is indeed encouraging.

Currently the NFFS property, whose problems were detailed in a July 11, 2003, *Sentinel* analysis, remains a highly restricted government facility under the auspices of

the Formerly Used Sites Remedial Action Program, whose maintenance and monitoring falls under the direction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Other than the Corps' very extensive maintenance of the facility, which includes a 10-acre Interim Waste Containment Structure housing high level radioactive waste on its western edge, and the Corps high-tech monitoring of radioactivity throughout the property which has been greatly enhanced from the earlier visit, not that much has changed at NFFS over the past two years.

But it nonetheless remains a very fascinating facility, which will be explored in greater detail in Part II of the *Sentinel's* report.

CWM Responds

Over at the 700-plus acre CWM operation, which last month gained approval by the state Department of Environmental Conservation

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What is CWM in Model City?

CWM (Chemical Waste Management) is a 710 acre chemical and industrial waste management facility. CWM serves private and government customers in the Northeastern United States and Canada by offering a wide array of chemical and industrial waste treatment, storage and disposal services. Our customers include over 80 manufacturers in Western New York.



Giving Back to the Community

CWM recently held its 15th annual charity golf tournament. This tournament raised \$20,000 for the W.H. Stevenson Elementary School playground in Ransomville. This donation brings the contributions over the years of the golf tournament to \$139,300. CWM also tries to take a leadership role in the community by helping local organizations. During the past year, CWM contributed nearly \$48,000 to local groups like the Ransomville and Youngstown libraries, area Boy Scout Troops, American Red Cross, United Way, Mt. St. Mary's Hospital, and many others.

Pictured above are: Michael Cancilla, Principal of W.H. Stevenson Elementary, John Hino, CWM Permitting Manager and Golf Tournament Chairperson, Steve Rydzik, Project Engineer, CWM, Pam Russell, chairperson of the playground campaign and Debbie Littere, playground committee.

Examples of Waste Streams Accepted at CWM:

Contaminated soils
Alkaline batteries
Soil contaminated w/ home heating oil
Lead paint chips from scraping and removal of lead paint
Fluorescent light bulbs
Soil w/ pesticides from orchards
Sandblast grit from Lewiston-Queenston Bridge
Leaded glaze, glass, decals from fine china manufacturing
Window and door frames from lead paint removal
Sludge from electroplating car parts
Old/outdated paint pigments
Spraybooth paint filters
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Tests show normal background readings

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of a long-sought Part 373 Hazardous Waste Management permit renewal covering a period to 2010, (*Sentinel*, Aug. 6), the company today is preparing for its future in Porter.

As one of the conditions outlined in DEC permit approval, CWM, which acquired the Balmer Road site from Chem-Trol and has operated there since the mid-80s, is now being called to address the radioactive contamination/health safety issue raised earlier by the *Sentinel* and now the focus of both of the Niagara County Health Department and the New York State Health Department.

CWM, which in years past had staunchly stood by 1970s- and 1980s-era federal DOD and DOE documents as proof that earlier radiation clean-ups on LOOW property were sufficiently addressed, is now working with private contractors to further examine this issue, particularly with respect to the remaining radiation on lands now owned by the company.

On-Site Surveys

At this writing, CWM is proceeding with a very detailed Site-Wide Radiological Survey Plan being carried out by URS Corp., a global engineering and design firm and a leading U.S. government contractor whose services include technical assistance and maintenance of properties, including those like CWM's Porter facility.

"We wanted to bring in the best of the best," remarked CWM District Manager Dick Sturges as he discussed the various elements of the URS project.

Being performed under the direction of B. Scott Davidson, CHP, CSP, who serves as principal health physicist with URS, the radiation environmental monitoring plan now underway at CWM includes detailed sampling and analysis of ground water surface water and air on the CWM's 700-plus acres for specified radiological parameters.

Considered very much a work in progress, it includes walk-throughs utilizing high-tech gamma scan equipment, ground water monitoring of 200 wells situated throughout the CWM property, surface water monitoring and site-wide air sampling.

Sturges reported much this work is being conducted in order to satisfy requirements from the DEC and DOH who wanted past and current background comparisons of radiation on the property.

Problem Sites

"Special Attention Areas," to be studied for radiation at CWM, include identified problem sites such as the PCB Warehouse on CWM's eastern end, lagoons, faculative ponds and former PCB storage tank areas on the southwest, the central drainage ditch coming off the NFFS property from the south, the University of Rochester burial area, and areas on the western edge and south that were deemed inaccessible in earlier studies. This is in addition to the overall radiation detection studies being performed on all areas of the CWM property.

Being conducted by four environmental technicians from the Buffalo area, this walk-through study, which began in mid-July, utilizes gamma scan equipment on a bicycle cart type set-up, which beams the results electronically via Global Positioning Systems.

Expected ultimately to establish 2 million data points of information throughout the CWM property, at this writing the results thus far are very limited, according to Davidson. Round #1 of this study was expected to conclude in late August and results of Round #2 would likely be completed by early 2006.

This study thus far has cost CWM roughly \$330,000 according to Sturges, who said it comprises both the preliminary plan work carried out by Shaw Environmental Inc. and the URS group.

Normal Background Readings

Davidson reported that technicians thus far have found readings of radioactivity in its limited studies, but very much within its established acceptable limits of 16,000 Counts Per Minute. Of the analysis thus far, CPM readings have ranged from a low of 2,500 to 2,999 CPM, to a high range of 10,000-10,499 CPM -- again all within acceptable range, said Davidson.

He adds the lower CPMs are comparable to radiation background typically found in asphalt, while the upper counts so far compare with

those found in conventional building materials such as granite and in cement mortars.

"Nothing out of the ordinary thus far," said Davidson.

Sturges closed by noting this study is very much ongoing and any findings that show problems will prompt further review and follow-up actions by CWM. "We're here to cooperate," he said.

Look for further details on these results as they come from both the URS group and CWM.

Part II of the *Sentinel's* report will focus on ongoing Army Corps work at NFFS. Look for a report in coming weeks.

Vendors sought for Country Fair

The Village of Lewiston Recreation Department is seeking flea market vendors for its eighth annual Country Fair.

The event takes place Saturday, Sept. 24 and Sunday, Sept. 25 -- rain or shine -- at the Lewiston Red Brick School grounds, 145 North Fourth St., Lewiston.

Vendors need to set up on Saturday; Sunday is optional. Setup time opens at 7 a.m.

To reserve a vendor space, call 754-8271 or 754-1990 and leave a message for Marianne.

Chris Beard in Blues Monday Finale

Chris Beard, often hailed as "The Prince of Blues," will present the last free concert in the Blue Monday series this Monday, Aug. 29.

The Blue Monday Finale takes place from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Hennepin Park gazebo, Fourth and Center streets.

Beard is known as a blues man through and through and one of the hottest guitarists on the contemporary blues scene.

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