

Corps workshop to focus on IWCS future

by Terry Duffy

The lead-off session of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' public participation process towards de-

veloping plans for the future of the Interim Waste Containment Structure at the Niagara Falls Storage Site begins Wednesday, Sept. 28,

from 6 to 9 p.m., at the Lewiston Senior Center.

Open to area residents, the workshop is the first of several be-

ing eyed over coming months by the Corps to engage the public as it proceeds towards development of
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Workshop to discuss IWCS options, costs of clean-up

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a feasibility study on IWCS cleanup and remediation, expected in summer 2012. It represents the first actual move by the Corps on determining the future of IWCS since it was built.

Constructed in the mid-1980s as a temporary facility, the 10-acre IWCS is located in a contained, isolated area of the NFSS, found in northern Lewiston on Pletcher Road, roughly one mile east of the Lewiston-Porter School District Creek Road campus. The cell contains an estimated 240,000 cubic yards of radiological and chemical residues and wastes consolidated into one area from past LOOW site activities over the decades. Included are wastes from early 1940s World War II-era munitions production at LOOW, wastes from mid-1940s Manhattan Project, atomic bomb-related activities done elsewhere that were ultimately transported for storage at the LOOW site, and wastes from various on-site LOOW activities, as well as off-site, from the 1950s to the late 1970s-early 1980s.

While adequately maintained and monitored over the years by the Corps, IWCS contains very high levels of radiological contamination, notably K-65 residues, R-10 residues, and assorted low-level radioactive and mixed wastes, including chemical. As such, IWCS has been a longtime worry to the neighboring commu-

nity. It has been a topic of discussion over the years by residents and local officials concerned over its integrity and stability, its impact on the area's groundwater, the potential for leakages, its potential as a terrorist target, and its effect on the overall health of residents and safety of the region.

In July, the U.S. Army Corps announced its intent to initiate a long-awaited remediation process of IWCS, a facility whose cleanup is expected to be wholly government funded under the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program managed by the Corps.

Wednesday's session, to be attended by reps from the Corps Buffalo District and newly named Corps facilitator Doug Sarno, is expected to feature lengthy discussion on IWCS waste disposal options and also lessons learned from a similar Corps clean-up project conducted at Fernald, Ohio, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Information related to the discussion is contained in a 254-page PDF released by the Corps in July and titled, "Waste Disposal Options and Fernald Lessons Learned Technical Memorandum." It can be found online at www.lrb.usace.army.mil/fusrap/nfss/index.htm#Documents.

Corps reps are also expected to discuss the waste profile of the IWCS and the waste disposal options, including estimates on the disposal volumes and preliminary disposal costs. Such a venture could go into the billions of dollars once the project is ultimately completed. Corps reps at an earlier session in Lewiston discussing the Fernald cleanup revealed a cost to the government of more than \$13 billion once that project was all said and done.

Following the presentation, input will be taken from the various stakeholder groups anticipated at the session. Expected are: the recently organized LOOW Community Action Council, a group of residents, Corps

reps, Sarno, and stakeholders operating under the chairmanship of University at Buffalo professor of chemistry Dr. Joe Gardella Jr.; and the LOOW Restoration Advisory Board, a like group of local residents and government stakeholders, organized by member chair William Choboy, whose objective is to continue to focus on not just IWCS, but LOOW site concerns beyond the scope of the NFSS facility. There's also likely expected interest from such groups as Residents for Responsible Government, Residents Organized For Lewiston's Environment, the Lewiston Environmental Commission, both the towns of Lewiston and Porter, the Lew-Port School District, Niagara County, state officials, the Safari Club, BuffaloNiagara Riverkeeper and others.

"This will be the first of our technically facilitated workshops for NFSS," said Corps Outreach Specialist Arleen Kreusch. "We look forward to working with the community throughout the development of the ... feasibility study."

The Corps announced earlier it will cover a number of relevant issues in coming months as the feasibility study development proceeds. Future IWCS topics en route to anticipated workshops include: radon assessments; meteorological evaluations; exposure assessments; environmental surveillance and remedial action objectives and future responses.

As noted, the whole process gets under way Wednesday, as discussions on the waste disposal options begin.

The Corps indicated it will be accepting comments on the new information both at the Wednesday session and by mail and email. For the latter, comments can be sent to: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District FUSRAP Team, 1776 Niagara Street, Buffalo, NY 14207 or via email to fusrap@usace.army.mil.