

LOOW-CAC begins outreach of federal reps

by Terry Duffy

Contacts are being made, albeit slowly, as the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works Community Action Committee has begun its outreach to federal legislators with a goal of enlisting their interest of future government funding for potential cleanups at the Niagara Falls Storage Site.

For more than a year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been active with a feasibility study to determine future remediation/cleanup actions of the Interim Waste Containment Structure at NFSS. The 10-acre site, an in-ground earthen cell with a clay cap, holds an assortment of consolidated high-level radioactive wastes and debris from throughout the NFSS and other sites that was constructed in the 1980s as a temporary cell with a potential shelf life of 25 to 50 years. It is continually monitored and maintained by the Corps to prevent leakages. Problem is, the high level K-65, R-10 and other radioactive wastes stored inside IWCS have a longevity extending into the thousands of years, and present continuing dangers of radon exposure to the community for years into the future in the event of a breach of the cell's cap, its walls or leakages into the area's groundwater.

For that reason, the Corps is proceeding on its feasibility study and aims to have a comprehensive analysis of the IWCS complete by 2014 or 2015 with a record of decision expected by then to plot the site's future.

But uncertainty over what happens next remains constant. Buffalo District Corps reps have repeatedly said that funding for any future comprehensive remediation/cleanup of the IWCS is far beyond its annual budget, that of the Department of Defense or the Department of Energy, actual government overseer of the NFSS property. Preliminary cost estimates well in excess of \$1 billion have been given for a potential cleanup, and Corps officials have said any such

SEE GROUP, continued on Page 2

NEW YORK SENTINEL

9 Feb 2013

2 Lewiston-Porter Sentinel

Group seeks to enlighten legislators on IWCS

continued from cover

funding would require specialized Congressional action.

It's with that understanding the executive committee of LOOW-CAC, a local volunteer citizens group working with Doug Sarno, Corps-contracted facilitator on the IWCS feasibility study, has been moving over past months as it now begins its approach of the area's elected federal representatives. At its session Tuesday at the Lewiston-Porter Community Resource Center, Dr. Joseph Gardella, John and Frances Larkin professor of Chemistry at the University of Buffalo and LOOW-CAC co-chair, said CAC had started the contact process with the local staffs of federally elected representatives for Western New York. "The idea has been to establish points of contact," said Gardella. Included thus far have been contacts made with the local offices of U.S. Sen. Kristen Gillibrand, Rochester-area

U.S. Rep. Louise Slaughter, whose district formerly included the LOOW site, and Buffalo-Niagara Falls-area U.S. Rep. Brian Higgins. To come are contacts with newly-elected U.S. Rep. Chris Collins, whose district contains the LOOW site, U.S. Rep. Tom Reed, representing the state's Southern Tier, and U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer.

"Our goal (once all contacts are made) is to have a possible joint meeting between the (Buffalo area) staffs," Gardella continued. He said CAC would then begin its work of educating the legislators on the IWCS and the need for remediation with a goal of direct meetings down the road in Washington. "We are reaching out ... to the entire WNY federal delegation to assist us in making the ultimate cleanup of the NFSS a priority and identifying the appropriate funding that will be required upon the final cleanup decision in 2015," Gardella said.

He indicated LOOW CAC aims to complete its meetings locally over coming months and have actual meetings in Washington in the future. The group will meet again on Tuesday, March 12, at 6:30 at Lew-Port to discuss its progress, and the session is open to the public.

For more on the LOOW-CAC, visit its website, www.loowcac.org.