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New data from Army Corps contradicts earlier assertions about LOOW site

By Timothy Chipp
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When the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers gathered with the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works Community Action Council last month, the message delivered concerning any possible radioactive leakage from the Niagara Falls Storage Site's interim waste containment structure sounded good for the community.

A representative for the federal government's department responsible for maintaining the temporary, 10-acre storage facility currently holding materials used in the Manhattan Project delivered a presentation suggesting those materials are not leaking into the ground around the site. The Corps said it was residual.

The other group fighting to clean up the site, the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works Restoration Advisory Board, is questioning the most recent report from the Army Corps. RAB officials say their group's own technical advisor chairwoman, Ann Roberts, is prepared to announce that the latest NFSS news isn't as rosy as proposed.

"A review by (Roberts) concludes that new data released by the Army Corps contradicts its assertion that radioactive contamination outside the containment cell is old and not newly created," RAB Chairman William Choboy said. "In other words, there appears to be more, not less evidence that the NFSS is already leaking."

RAB members are set to discuss their own take on the most recent findings from the Army Corps at their own meeting at 6 p.m. tonight in the Alumni Room of the Lewiston-Porter School District's Community Resource Center, 4061 Creek Road, Porter.

In November, the Army Corps made a presentation as part of an environmental study pertaining to the areas surrounding the interim waste containment structure.

Surrounding the site, there are several shallow and deep wells drilled for Corps workers to monitor radioactivity levels, including a cluster south of the IWCS and one west. Both areas have shown dramatically elevated levels of uranium contamination, which the Corps said is caused by residual forces, not a leak in the cell.

RAB members say there's more to the story, which Roberts is slated to present herself.

“For whatever reason, the Corps elected not to share with the CAC that other, informed individual stakeholders reached different conclusions and why,” RAB Member Amy Witryol said via email. “The Corps is well aware of the concerns.”