A field investigation plan for the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works has been sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

***By Richard Baldwin*** | *News Niagara Reporter*
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LEWISTON – Decades-long efforts to clean up chemical and radioactive contamination at the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site have taken a small step forward with the issuance of a final plan for a field investigation to analyze some soil and water samples that may not already have been thoroughly tested or cleaned up.

The latest field-investigation plan, issued earlier this month, is intended to:

• Determine groundwater contamination in the northern portion of a relatively small area now known as the Niagara Falls Storage Site and around the southern portion of the Interim Waste Containment Structure on that site.

• Identify the source of increasing concentrations of uranium in groundwater at one specific location.

• Eliminate potential pathways for off-site migration of groundwater contaminants along underground pipelines.

• Evaluate the potential for groundwater contamination along a water line near the southeast corner of the Interim Waste Containment Structure and eliminate that line as a pathway for contamination.

The plan, prepared by a company called URS Group, was delivered to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and made public by the Corps' Buffalo District headquarters at 1776 Niagara St., Buffalo. It consists of more than 200 pages, including statistical tables, appendices, charts, aerial photographs and other data.

Arleen K. Kreusch, outreach program specialist for the Corps of Engineers' Environmental Project Management Team, said officials would welcome emailed comments from the public at fusrap@usace.army.mil within 30 days.

The full text of the Field Sampling and Analysis Plan is available at www.lrb.usace.army.mil in the "Scopes of Work/Work Plans" section of the website.

The URS Group said the plan "consists of two components: a Field Sampling Plan (FSP), ... and a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), included under a separate cover.

"The FSP covers the overall objectives of the investigation, outlines the tasks to be completed, and provides guidance and procedures to be followed while completing the effort.

"The QAPP describes data quality objectives to be applied, the analytical methods and measurements, quality assurance/quality control protocols for the work efforts, and the data assessment procedures for the evaluation and identification of any data limitations."

The target date for completion of this plan is May 14.

In its introduction to the Field Sampling Plan, the URS Group explained that the site at 1397 Pletcher Road in Lewiston, represents a portion of the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works that was used by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Manhattan Engineer District and the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission to store radioactive residues and other materials beginning in 1944.

"Nearly all the radioactive residues sent to the Niagara Falls Storage Site originated from uranium processing activities conducted for the Manhattan Engineer District and Atomic Energy Commission at the Linde Air Products facility in [the Town of] Tonawanda, N.Y., the Mallinckrodt Chemical Works refinery in St. Louis, Mo., and the Middlesex Sampling Plant in Middlesex, N.J."

The bulk of the residues are buried under a cap of clay and soil at the Interim Waste Containment Structure in one corner of the Niagara Falls Storage Site. The government's official description says the storage site is a "191-acre federally owned site, a remnant of a larger Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site used by the wartime Manhattan Engineer District."

"The storage site and adjacent ordnance works properties were developed for the production of trinitrotoluene [TNT] during World War II. However, TNT production never reached full capacity, and the site became an interim storage facility, first receiving radioactive wastes and residues in 1944."

TNT is an explosive that was used in conventional bombs during World War II. The Manhattan Engineer District was instrumental in developing the atomic bombs that were dropped in Japan to hasten the end of the war.

The storage facility is called "interim" because the material stored there may eventually be removed for permanent disposal somewhere else, probably at a licensed disposal site in another state.

The Community Action Council, an independent group of citizens interested in what is going to be done with the hazardous materials there, plans to discuss the latest field-investigation plan during a public meeting Dec. 4. Douglas J. Sarno, technical facilitator for the Community Action Council, did not say what time or where the meeting would take place, but the group usually meets at 6:30 p.m. in the Lewiston-Porter Central School Administration Building, 4061 Creek Road.

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