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Niagara Gazette

Army Corps plan calls for removal of radioactive waste at LOOW site

ARMY CORP: Plans calls for removal of radioactive waste and clean up of Pletcher Road site.

By Mark Scheer mark.scheer@niagara-gazette.com

http://www.niagara-gazette.com/news/local_news/army-corps-plan-calls-for-removal-of-radioactive-waste-at/article_37f806d6-1ef6-5a8e-9459-dacd5507a5d4.html

The decades-long effort to rid the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site of radioactive waste and contamination has taken a big step forward.

A proposed remediation plan released Thursday by the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers is calling for the "off-site disposal of the entire contents" of the property commonly referred to as the LOOW site. The land, located on Pletcher Road, became an interim storage facility for radioactive waste back in 1944. Materials stored on the property stem from the development of nuclear weapons as part of the Manhattan Project.

Radioactive wastes and residues continued to be brought to the site for storage until 1952. In 1982, the Department of Energy began clean-up and consolidation of the radioactive wastes and residues in an earthen containment cell constructed on the property. That work, according to the Army Corp., was completed in 1986.

The Army Corp. examined four alternatives for the property, identifying Alternative 4 as the "preferred alternative." A notice announcing the release of the feasibility study and proposed plan describes Alternative 4 as involving "excavation, partial treatment and off-site disposal of the entire contents of the IWCS."

Amy Witryol, one of several Lewiston residents and officials who have for years been advocating for such a plan to move forward at the LOOW site, characterized the announcement as "huge" and a "major step forward" in the effort to rid the site of radioactive waste.

"We've had people in this county working on this for more than a half century," she said. (The Army Corps. of Engineers) came to the right conclusion."

The analysis of the site included five alternatives, ranging from no action to partial removal of hazardous materials with treatment and off-site removal of radioactive materials. Information released by the Army Corps. on Thursday describes the preferred alternative as providing "the best overall protection of human health and the environment."

Under a section identified as "key additional reasons" for selecting Alternative 4, the Army Corps notes that the move would: consolidate LOOW site material with similar waste at an off-site government-owned or "appropriately licensed" byproduct material disposal facility; decrease the overall number of disposal facilities as well as "reduce future spending on post-closure care;" support the "stated goal" of the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act (UMTRCA) regulations, which discourages the "proliferation of small waste disposal sites" and encourages the reduction of "perpetual surveillance obligations" and consolidate disposal sites helping to reduce "the potential risk to the public from government-owned wastes."

The Army Corps. is now accepting public comments on the proposed plan through Feb. 6, 2016. A public meeting will be held next month during which Army Corps. representatives will offer information on the history of the site,

an explanation of the proposed plan and preferred alternative and will accept public comments. The session is scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 13 at the Town of Lewiston Senior Center, 4361 Lower River Road, Youngstown.

The proposed plan and supporting documents are available electronically in the administrative record file for the site, which is located in the Town of Lewiston Public Library, 305 S. Eighth St., Lewiston and the Youngstown Free Library, 240 Lockport St., Youngstown.

The feasibility study and proposed plan are also available on the web at:
<http://www.lrb.usace.army.mil/Missions/HTRW/FUSRAP/NiagaraFallsStorageSite.aspx> in the Reports Section.

Additional information can be obtained via email at fusrap@usace.army.mil, or by calling (800) 833-6390.

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Buffalo News

Federal plan would remove all nuclear waste from Lewiston – years from now

By Thomas J. Prohaska | News Niagara Reporter | @ThomasProhaska | Google+ on December 3, 2015 - 7:42 PM

<http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/lewiston-porter/federal-plan-would-remove-all-nuclear-waste-from-lewiston-x2013-years-from-now-20151203>

LEWISTON – After 71 years, the federal government has decided that all the nuclear waste from the World War II atomic bomb project should be removed from Lewiston.

However, it may take another generation for the job to be finished.

John Busse, Army Corps of Engineers project manager for the Niagara Falls Storage Site, as the waste repository is known, said Thursday that the Corps' \$490 million removal plan assumes funding won't be available until at least 2022, and that Congress won't appropriate it all at once. Sites where work is under way take precedence.

Busse expects that the funding will come in 10 annual installments. If his timetable is accurate, the residue from the bomb that helped to end World War II won't be completely gone from Niagara County until 2032.

The plan calls for 193,230 cubic yards of waste to be excavated. Some would be treated on site. All of it would be hauled by trucks in 3,800 large steel containers to Waste Control Specialists, a privately owned Texas facility licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to house it safely for 10,000 years.

At first, nuclear waste was housed in a concrete silo on the Lewiston site.

In the 1980s, a cleanup project on surrounding properties, also contaminated with radioactivity, led to the consolidation of all the waste, including contaminated soil, the demolition debris from the silo, and other nuclear garbage, in a 10-acre landfill called the Interim Waste Containment Structure. The Manhattan Project waste is inside a building within the landfill, which used to be the Ordnance Works' water treatment plant.

"These residue materials are going to be radioactive for 1,000 years," Busse said.

The Corps studied four alternatives, three of which called for partial removals or a thicker cap on the landfill. Busse said the Corps has chosen a total cleanup instead.

“The community’s been waiting a long time for this,” he said.

It will continue to wait a long time for the project to be done. The first step is a public comment period that starts Monday and ends Feb. 6. It will include a public meeting at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 13 in the Lewiston Senior Citizens Center, Lower River and Pletcher roads. The comment period starts at 8 p.m.

After that, Busse said, a 12-to-18-month review process will lead to a final decision. “We have to take this all the way up to the assistant secretary of the Army for civil works,” he said.

If the plan is approved, the Corps has to go through another study and review process for plans to clean up the rest of the storage site, including the groundwater. Once those plans are chosen and approved, the Corps can start asking Congress for funding.

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