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## Higgins decries funding levels for waste cleanup projects

**BUDGET:** Higgins says additional dollars needed for Niagara Falls Storage Site, other local cleanup efforts.

Staff reports 13 hrs ago

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U.S. Rep. Brian Higgins, D-Niagara Falls and Buffalo, expressed disappointment with the level of funding included in the 2017 Energy and Water Appropriations bill for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Formerly Utilized Site Remedial Action Program.

In the Western New York community, FUSRAP projects still in need of funding include the Niagara Falls Storage Site, the Tonawanda Landfill property and the Seaway Site, also in Tonawanda.

The bill, released in the House of Representatives this week, allocates \$103 million for FUSRAP projects. Higgins was among a number of members pushing appropriators, in a letter sent in March, to fund the FUSRAP budget at \$150 million for FY 2017.

"While the 2017 FUSRAP House allocation matches the administration request, it still falls short given the great need," Higgins said. "We should be more aggressive in funding the clean-up of radioactive messes that the federal government left in communities throughout America's industrial heartland as a result of the Manhattan Project and other early atomic weapon development programs."

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To date, in excess of \$300 million has already been invested in Western New York at sites including the former Linde plant in Tonawanda, which is now home to Praxair, and the Rattlesnake Creek site in Tonawanda, which was transformed into Riverview Commerce Park.

While the FY 2017 appropriation is expected to fund about \$4 million in remedial work in Western New York, more than \$1 billion in additional work is still needed in this region alone.

The aforementioned letter from members of Congress to leaders on a subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations reads, "Given the Federal government's direct role in contaminating these sites, it is imperative that adequate funding be provided to the Army Corps to address the public health and environmental risks these sites pose."

It goes on to explain the fluctuations in budgeting over the years. It was reportedly between \$140 million and \$160 million between 1998 and 2008, then jumped up to \$240 million in 2009. After that, it was reduced over the years to the current amount. The Congress members said increasing funding sooner rather than later would "save millions of dollars over the long-term."

As the Niagara Gazette previously reported, the preferred option for the Interim Waste Containment Structure of NFSS, Alternative 4, is estimated to cost \$490.6 million or about \$70 million each year over seven years, as Stephen Bousquet, chief of the Environmental Health Section explained during the poster-viewing portion of the public meeting. A record of decision is expected to be completely filed by 2017, Special Project Branch Chief John Busse said during a presentation.

The IWCS is one of three operable units identified for the site. This amount does not take into account the cost of the Balance of Plant or Groundwater units. These units will go through the same process (feasibility study, proposed plan, period of public comment) and to reach their own records of decision by 2020.

After the records of decision have been finalized and after the project is granted funds to begin, Busse estimated a two- to four-year period to acquire contracts for the work and then an additional year to finalize works plans before any physical work can begin. With the IWCS estimated at seven to eight years and unknown estimations for the other two operable units, the NFSS project will not see completion until 2030 at the very earliest just based on those numbers.

## This Week's Circulars



## Niagara Gazette Events (<http://www.niagara-gazette.com/events/>)

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| <b>APR 23</b> | <b>Black and Brown Comedy Get Down</b><br>First Niagara Cent...   Buffalo, NY<br>( <a href="http://www.niagara-gazette.com/events/#/details/BLACK-AND-BROWN-COMEDY-GET-DOWN/2265259/2016-04-23T08">http://www.niagara-gazette.com/events/#/details/BLACK-AND-BROWN-COMEDY-GET-DOWN/2265259/2016-04-23T08</a> ) |
| <b>THU 14</b> | <b>Solid Gold Motown</b><br>Fallsview Casino   Niagara Falls, ON<br>( <a href="http://www.niagara-gazette.com/events/#/details/SOLID-GOLD-MOTOWN/2036905/2016-">http://www.niagara-gazette.com/events/#/details/SOLID-GOLD-MOTOWN/2036905/2016-</a> )  |

