

UB chemist's work to address radioactive waste in WNY honored by EPA

Joseph Gardella Jr. says Manhattan Project-era materials must be removed from Niagara Falls Storage Site

By Charlotte Hsu [/news/about-us/staff/hsu.html]

Release Date: May 19, 2016



"The danger to the community is real, and it's twofold. The first threat is economic, related to property values, and then there is the threat to public health."

Joseph Gardella Jr., professor of chemistry
University at Buffalo

BUFFALO, N.Y. — For years, University at Buffalo chemistry professor Joseph Gardella Jr. has worked tirelessly to ensure that the local community's voice was heard as the federal government decided what to do with nearly 200,000 cubic yards of radioactive waste stored in Lewiston, New York — remnants of the Manhattan Project that produced the country's first nuclear weapons.

This month, for his efforts, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) honored Gardella, PhD, as one of 28 recipients of the Environmental Champion Award in New York State. He received the recognition, presented annually, at a May 13 ceremony at EPA offices in New York City.

A news release issued by EPA Region 2 [https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-honors-new-york-environmental-champions-0] highlighted Gardella's contributions in relation to the Niagara Falls Storage Site (NFSS) in Lewiston, where the hazardous waste is stored: "Dr. Gardella dedicated hundreds of volunteer hours and played a paramount role in facilitating a dialogue with community and the public that resulted in the decision to remove radioactive waste from the site," the news release stated.

The NFSS, part of the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works, houses radioactive materials including uranium, radium and thorium.

Gardella, a SUNY Distinguished Professor and the John and Frances Larkin Professor of Chemistry at UB, has co-chaired a Community Action Council tied to the storage facility since the council's formation in 2011.

In that role, his primary duty has been to gather public input on the future of the NFSS to help inform the Army Corps of Engineers' decision on what to do with the hazardous waste inside. He has organized public meetings to solicit community feedback, disseminated information about the NFSS to the public and helped build a website and Facebook page that share the history and current status of the site.

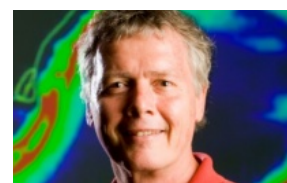
The effort has begun to yield results: In December 2015, the Army Corps of Engineers released a proposal recommending that all radioactive material be removed [http://www.lrb.usace.army.mil/Media/NewsReleases/tabid/6147/Article/632487/feasibility-study-and-proposed-plan-available-for-the-niagara-falls-storage-sit.aspx] from the Interim Waste Containment Structure on the NFSS, which houses 193,230 cubic yards of radioactive residues and wastes.

"Our next job as the community leadership is to lobby Congress to get the money to carry out this recommendation," Gardella said. "The Niagara Falls Storage Site was meant to be a temporary facility, and there are permanent storage facilities elsewhere that were built to house this kind of waste. We just need to get the money to do the cleanup."

While Gardella has seen no evidence that the waste is leaking into the environment, he says there is no question removal of the radioactive materials would benefit surrounding neighborhoods.

"You've got a school district nearby where you have families that buy homes there because the schools are good," Gardella said. "Many in the community don't feel that in a residential area, they need to be the official dumping ground of hazardous waste and radioactive waste. I agree with this concern."

MEET OUR EXPERTS



Joseph Atkinson [/news/experts/joseph-atkinson-faculty-expert-great-lakes-water-levels.html]

Director of the Great Lakes Program

Expertise: Great Lakes water levels, flooding and water pollution

Phone: 716-645-2220

All Our Experts>

[/news/faculty-experts.html]

Social Media / RSS

Read the latest in your favorite channels.

[/news/our-services/social-media-and-rss.html]



UB Mobile

Take UB With You. Wherever.

> DOWNLOAD UB MOBILE APP

[http://mobile.buffalo.edu/]

“The danger to the community is real, and it's twofold. The first threat is economic, related to property values, and then there is the threat to public health. So while the site is stable today, that doesn't guarantee that it's going to be stable tomorrow.”

Media Contact Information

Charlotte Hsu [</news/about-us/staff/hsu.html>]

Director of News Content

Sciences

Tel: 716-645-4655

chs22@buffalo.edu [<mailto:chs22@buffalo.edu>]

Twitter: @UBScience [<https://twitter.com/UBScience>]

Pinterest: [UB Science](http://pinterest.com/ubscience/) [<http://pinterest.com/ubscience/>]