



## TOWN OF TONAWANDA: Army Corps restarts landfill study

By Daniel Pye<br><a href="mailto:pyed@gnewspring.com">E-mail Dan</a>  
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— Starting next week, the Army Corps of Engineers will once again be conducting studies on the Town of Tonawanda Landfill.

Steve Buechi, the Army Corps' project manager for the town landfill, said the added tests are in response to a bevy of comments received by the Corps after the agency recommended no further action on the site in 2007. Elected officials spoke out against the proposed action, but Town of Tonawanda Supervisor Anthony Caruana said public outcry is what put the project back on the Corps' radar. City of Tonawanda Councilman Rick Davis, who worked with other local leaders to disseminate form letters for residents to mail in, agreed. "Who are we but elected officials?" Davis said. "The residents are the ones who drive government to do what it's going to do."

The new tests will include a gamma walkover survey to locate radioactive contamination in surface soil, drilling to collect and analyze soil samples to better define the boundaries of radioactive material and installing fourteen temporary well points to measure groundwater depth and collect groundwater samples. If that sounds like the same tests that were done the last time around, it's because they are.

While Buechi admits the testing is very similar to that already done in past rounds, he is confident this time tests will be more comprehensive to answer lingering questions for those living around the site.

"We're looking deeper than we did previously and reviewing different migration pathways within the landfill that hadn't been examined as thoroughly last time," Buechi said.

Buechi went on to say that the Corps' number one priority is protecting human health and the environment. While the threshold for what poses a danger hasn't changed — meaning if the findings are the same the recommendation will be the same — he's confident this new battery of tests will enable the Corps to determine once and for all whether extracting the underground material is necessary.

Regardless of what the study finds, Caruana and many others just want the material gone once and for all. They're hopeful the new tests will come to a new conclusion.

"We want this stuff totally out of there and away from the town," Caruana said. "We have the money to cap it, but we can't cap it with this stuff in place there."

Davis also said he is less interested in the tests being used than the end results.

"This will be a waste of money unless it leads to those 3.5 acres being cleaned up," he said.

The price tag for the survey comes in at approximately \$900,000, footed by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Buechi said the tests were coming regardless, but that the stimulus money helped speed up the process.

Crews will be on the property in the coming days to clear the area for testing, but Buechi said there won't be any impact to the adjacent properties or the community. Testing should be complete by December, with an up-to-date risk assessment ready by fall 2010.

Contact reporter Daniel Pye at 693-1000, ext. 158.

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LANDFILL: Pictured is the Town of Tonawanda landfill in May 2006, before the latest round of citizen concern arose in an attempt remove radioactive materials in the landfill. The Tonawanda News