



Ken-Ton Bee



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Warning flag raised on landfill

Report says area could become risk to human health

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Editor



The Town of Tonawanda Landfill, shown above, was deemed safe under its current operation, according to testing conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers Buffalo Division. However, future erosion could cause it to become a health hazard.

Ground contaminants in the Tonawanda Landfill appear to be safe for now, but a recent assessment of the property shows that the area could eventually pose a threat to human health.

The Army Corps of Engineers Buffalo District recently completed an updated baseline risk assessment for the Landfill Operable Unit of the Tonawanda Landfill Vicinity Property.

The designation of this area — a 55-acre property located off East Park Drive, north of the Interstate 290 expressway and directly south of Hackett Drive in the City of Tonawanda — was based on the Department of Energy's discovery of radioactive material at the site that appeared to have similar characteristics to material found at other Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action locations.

According to information provided on the Corps of Engineers' website, from 2009 through 2011, the organization conducted soil, groundwater, sediment and surface water sampling on the Landfill Operable Unit of the vicinity property to analyze the levels and extent of uranium, radium and thorium in the Landfill Operable Unit.

Data from this sampling was used to update the baseline risk assessment — the last evaluation was conducted in 2005 — to ensure that it accurately reflects the potential for human exposure to FUSRAP related material in the Landfill Operable Unit, given the landfill's proximity to residential property.

The Corps of Engineers updated assessment concluded the following: that risks to human health from potential exposures to FUSRAP-related material are within the acceptable limits established in the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan for the current use of the Landfill Operable Unit as it is currently configured.

The report further explains that if the surface of the landfill is not maintained and is allowed to erode over time, exposing FUSRAP-related material that is currently buried, then risks to trespassers or other users on the site could increase above the NCP acceptable risk range within the 1,000-year evaluation period.

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Town of Tonawanda Supervisor Anthony Caruana, while admitting that he's no expert, found it hard to believe that the materials can be safe since they are settled near a residential area.

Caruana added that he is disappointed with the results because the assessment didn't provide any news that the municipality wasn't already aware of.

"I won't be happy until all the waste at that site is removed," he said, adding that the area where the contaminants lie can't be capped because it is on a slope.

He said he wants to see the waste taken away from the site so that the area can be used for other purposes.

"We don't want it to be a landfill. We'd like to use the space for recreational purposes," he said.

Based on the analysis provided in the updated baseline risk assessment, the Corps of Engineers' next step will be to create a feasibility study for the Landfill Operable Unit. The study will develop remedial alternatives, which would be appropriate to mitigate potential future unacceptable risks from exposure to the buried FUSRAP-related material in the Landfill Operable Unit.

A presentation regarding the assessment results was scheduled to be held in Tonawanda after press time on Tuesday.

The updated baseline risk assessment is available on the Corps of Engineers' Tonawanda Landfill website, www.lrb.usace.army.mil/fusrap/landfill.

The Administrative Record File for the Tonawanda Landfill Vicinity Property contains related documentation used in the decision-making process for the site. Reports and documents in the file may be viewed at the following locations: US Army Corps of Engineers, 1776 Niagara St., Buffalo (by appointment only); and at the Tonawanda Public Library, 333 Main St., Tonawanda.

For further information on the Landfill Operable Unit of the Tonawanda Landfill Vicinity Property, call 1-800-833-6390 or email at fusrap@usace.army.mil.

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