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EDITOR'S PICK

## Common Council floats pollution committee

ENVIRONMENT: Several active hazardous waste sites are located in the city.

BY TIM FENSTER [tim.fenster@lockportjournal.com](mailto:tim.fenster@lockportjournal.com) 8 hrs ago



US&J FILE PHOTO  
Niagara County Legislator John Syracuse, R-Newfane, looks over Eighteen Mile Creek by the Fisherman's Park in Burt.



City officials are interested in exploring a new committee to address pollution and educate residents on the issue.

First Ward Alderman Joseph P. Oates made the suggestion at the Common Council's Aug. 2 meeting, and other council members and residents greeted the idea warmly.

Exactly who would be on the committee remains to be seen, as discussions are very preliminary. Oates said it should include experts in contamination cleanup, to educate residents on remediation processes and the agencies involved.

"We'd be better off with some advice from people who have some expertise in that area," Oates said. "The environmental issues seem to be popping up and we don't have any type of committee."

According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, there are at least four active hazardous waste sites in the city — Guterl Specialty Steel Corp. at 695 Ohio St., the Old Upper Mountain Road site, the Eighteen Mile Creek Corridor along Mill Street and Eighteen Mile Creek itself.

Cleanup of the Eighteen Mile Creek sites is currently underway.

The DEC also lists more than a dozen sites that have already been cleaned up, as well as several brownfield sites, including the GM Components Holdings, LLC site and VanDeMark Chemical, Inc.

Brownfields are sites where contamination levels exceed those of soil cleanup objectives or other health and environmental standards.

"The goal of the Brownfield Cleanup Program (BCP) is to encourage private-sector cleanups of brownfields and to promote their redevelopment as a means to revitalize economically blighted communities," states the DEC.

Several council members said there is a definite need for such a committee. Mayor Anne E. McCaffrey pointed out that radiologic contamination has been documented around the 70-acre site Guterl Specialty Steel/Simonds Saw and Steel site.

Simonds Saw and Steel rolled two radioactive metals, uranium and thorium, for a portion of the site for the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission between 1946 and 1956.

However, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers declared in 2010 there was no "imminent threat to public safety or human health" at the site.

"We need to get some action on some of these," McCaffrey said.

Shirley Nicholas, who spent years pushing state and federal officials to clean up the Eighteen Mile Creek sites, enthusiastically endorsed the idea. Nicholas won the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's highest honor, the Environmental Champion award, earlier this year for her advocacy.

"I think the idea to form a committee to address the issue of pollution is an absolutely super idea," she said.

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