

TOWN OF TONAWANDA

Sampling at Seaway N-waste site under review

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News Northtowns Bureau

500HP

The sampling of the Town of Tonawanda's Seaway landfill site has been completed and the results are under review by the state Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Health and federal Environmental Protection Agency, according to officials from the Army Corps of Engineers.

Sampling of the site began last August "to gain additional information about the nature and extent of contamination in the landfill that resulted from the nation's early atomic energy program," according to the Corps of Engineers. Results are expected to be made public late next month.

The Seaway site is a former sanitary landfill located along the River Road industrial corridor.

Seaway was contaminated when low-level radioactive residues from uranium processing at the former Linde Air Products Division of Union Carbide were transported there and to the nearby Ashland 1 site. About 6,000 cubic yards of low-grade uranium tailings were relocated and disposed of in other areas of the Seaway site in 1974.

The site was contaminated when soil containing low-level radioactive residue was relocated from Ashland 1 between 1974 and 1982.

In all, contamination was identified in four areas of the 100-acre Seaway site. Three of those — Areas A, B and C — were specifically tar-

geted by the Corps for sampling last summer. Area A is about nine acres, and Areas B and C cover a total of about three acres.

"We took about 20 to 30 percent more samples than we anticipated when we started," said Tim Byrnes, project manager of the federal Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program, or FUSRAP, at Seaway.

Because of the increased number of samples, the laboratory validation and results process required additional time, he said.

Byrnes was unable to disclose preliminary findings of the sampling, pending review by state and federal authorities, but did indicate that uranium, radium and thorium were among the radioactive materials that were found at Seaway.

The sampling determined the location and volume estimate of Manhattan Project residues, the impact surrounding landfill materials have on the mobility of the residues, and whether any chemicals near the waste would require that special disposal options be considered.

"This information will be useful when we begin to look at alternatives (for the site)," Byrnes said.

Options range from leaving the residues where they are to remediating the site and transporting them off-site, he said. Decisions about what should be done with the materials and the future land use of the property will be established later in the process.

Meanwhile, Byrnes said the recent sampling project and residues at Seaway do not pose an immediate human health risk.

"Seaway is a pretty isolated site with very little activity of human content," Byrnes said. "This is of a lesser priority than the other sites. We're going to slow down this particular site to pick up on the other sites."

The proximity of the contaminated Linde site and the Town of Tonawanda landfill to human activity makes those two sites "higher priority" for the Corps, he said.

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