

LOCAL NEWS

Comments sought on 'Seaway Site' N-wastes

BY JANICE HABUDA

NEWS STAFF REPORTER

A plan to contain some, and remove some, of the nuclear wastes dumped in the "Seaway Site" in the Town of Tonawanda has gone before the public.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opened a public comment period last week on its preferred alternative for the site.

A public meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. Sept. 24 in the community room of the Philip Sheridan Building, 3200 Elmwood Ave., and the comment period will run through Oct. 27.

For the most part, the site falls within the 100-acre Seaway Industrial Park along River Road. Browning-Ferris Industries had operated a landfill on the property until 1993, when most of it was capped.

The federal government dumped radioactive residues — containing radium, thorium and uranium — from the nation's nuclear weapons program on adjacent property, known as Ashland 1 and 2. More than 200,000 tons of contaminated wastes were removed during remediation of those sites and shipped by rail to Utah.

But during that work, additional contamination was discovered on land once in the Ashland Site but later made part of the Seaway Site.

"It wasn't like we just moved [the con-

tamination] around and put it in the Seaway area," said Arlene Kreusch, an outreach program specialist for the corps.

Plans call for containing the residues within the landfill, where they would be covered with at least 4½ feet of material.

About 8,000 cubic yards of materials outside of the landfill's leachate collection system would be removed and shipped off-site for disposal. In addition, the federal government would provide long-term surveillance and maintenance to ensure that land-use controls prevent access to and disturbance of the materials.

In related news, the corps will not conduct additional tests at the Town of Tonawanda Landfill until next spring.

This spring, the corps announced plans to confirm levels of radiological contamination at the landfill, also a disposal site for wastes generated by nuclear weapons research conducted locally during and after World War II.

It planned to take samples this fall, if money could be diverted from other projects. Now, the corps is looking toward the next federal fiscal year, which will begin Oct. 1.

"We are hoping to try to start it in the spring of fiscal 2009," Kreusch said in a previous interview.

The landfill's northern border abuts a City of Tonawanda neighborhood, whose

residents have successfully lobbied for further testing of their properties. Residents want the radiological wastes removed.

"The bottom line, to me, is that it still needs to come out," Tonawanda Mayor Ronald Pilozzi said. "The fact that people live right next to it [should] make it fairly easy for the federal government to make up their mind. I know it's fairly easy in our minds."

Previously, the corps had recommended "no action" on the site, maintaining that the wastes did not pose elevated human risks and could be left safely buried.

A final decision has been postponed, Kreusch said.

The landfill is considered two sites: the landfill itself and the area north called the Mudflats, according to Steve Buechi of the corps.

"There were a couple of main areas that the [public] comments focused on," Buechi said. "There were feelings that the investigations were not extensive. That's why we decided to do some additional sampling there."

*Northtowns Correspondent Mark Ciemcioch contributed to this report.
e-mail: jhabuda@buffnews.com*

M

C
1340

H
G
G
B

Sw

H
Appl

14oz