

Tonawanda Landfill Vicinity Property News from the Corps

Sent Fri 9/11/2020 12:02 PM

Hello from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Buffalo District:

On July 7, 2020, members of the Buffalo District team performed radon flux sampling at the Tonawanda Landfill Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP) Vicinity Property to verify that the record of decision cleanup goals were met. Validated data gathered from the 108 radon flux canisters that were placed over the excavation areas of the vicinity property indicate that the cleanup goals were indeed met. "It was very rewarding to be able to complete the cleanup fieldwork for this property in less than a year," said Mark Legeza, Health Physicist, Environmental Health Section.

Implementation of the selected remedy for the vicinity property was performed from June through December 2019. "During the targeted shallow removal, 4,345 cubic yards of radioactive-contaminated soils were removed to a depth of five feet using precision excavation techniques guided by rigorous field scanning and laboratory analysis," said Bill Kowalewski, Chief, Special Projects Branch. "Additional coordination was required because a separate contractor was used to transport and dispose of the excavated FUSRAP-related materials exceeding cleanup goals at a permitted out-of-state disposal facility in Belleville, Michigan."

The vicinity property is located in the Town of Tonawanda, New York, and backs up to a line of houses in the City of Tonawanda. "The team was successful in keeping local partners engaged throughout the project including community leaders, residential property owners whose homes were located just yards from the site and an elementary school nearby," Bill Kowalewski continued. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and local elected officials were kept informed regarding upcoming work and progress being made.

"Finally cleaning-up this radioactive waste has been a priority of mine because it is critical for the health and well-being of Tonawanda residents. After years of fighting, I am pleased that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has finished their portion of the work to clean up the radioactive waste at the Tonawanda landfill site," said Senator Chuck Schumer.

"The Corps' highest priority was to be protective of human health and the environment, and ensure that work was conducted in a safe and efficient manner," said Jeff Rowley, the site's project manager. During May, the Corps completed the final grading and seeding of the vicinity property. During the radon flux sampling and the final grading and seeding of the vicinity property, actions were taken to protect the workforce and mitigate potential impacts of COVID-19. Regular communication was maintained with site workers to emphasize the importance of taking appropriate precautions -- such as social distancing, wearing appropriate protective equipment, and personal hygiene measures -- to safeguard their health and welfare while working during the pandemic.

During 2017, a record of decision was signed for the Landfill Operable Unit of the vicinity property. The selected remedy in the record of decision was targeted shallow removal and off-site disposal to address FUSRAP-related material. “The cleanup goals for the Landfill Operable Unit were set so that a recreational user would have unrestricted use of the site with respect to the FUSRAP-related contamination,” said Stephen Buechi, Chief, Environmental Project Management Section.

The Tonawanda Landfill Vicinity Property was designated into FUSRAP in 1992 when early Department of Energy investigations around the Linde Site detected elevated levels of FUSRAP-related radionuclides in the landfill. The vicinity property consists of two operable units (OUs): the 55-acre Landfill OU and the 115-acre Mudflats OU. The Buffalo District completed work at the Mudflats OU in 2008 with a no-action record of decision.

The Corps will prepare a site closeout report for the vicinity property to document completion of the site cleanup. Once the site closeout report is complete, the Corps will begin the process of transferring the Tonawanda Landfill Vicinity Property to the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management for long-term stewardship.

Additional information regarding the vicinity property is available at <https://www.lrb.usace.army.mil/Missions/HTRW/FUSRAP/Tonawanda-Landfill/> on the web.