

Mudflats tested for toxins

540 FT
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██████████ a Brookside Terrace resident for 32 years, is one of many who used the mudflats area behind his Tonawanda house for recreation.

He rode his motorcycle there until 1985, when he gave up his hobby because of a leg problem.

Now he says he would have quit for a reason he didn't know about 16 years ago. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is investigating the mudflats along with the Town of Tonawanda

Landfill for possible radioactive material. The material was left over from the country's Manhattan Project, which designed the atomic bomb during World War II.

Beginning June 11 and lasting approximately a month the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will test soil and groundwater for contaminants in the area of the mudflats, a 170-acre plot bordered by the I-290 to the south, the CSX railroad to the east, the city of Tonawanda to the north and East Park Drive to the west.



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"We're testing for uranium, radium and thorium," said Steve Buechi, the project engineer.

The materials left over are from the Linde site, where uranium ore was processed during the early years of the atomic energy program, Buechi said. A 1991 radiological survey turned up the contaminants, and a 1994 study defined the areas where the material was buried.

"We plan to conduct a remedial investigation to determine how much contamination is at these sites and develop a feasibility study," he said.

The Corps sent letters about the upcoming study to residents living on Wadsworth Court, Brookside

Terrace and Hackett Drive who have property bordering the landfill. Residents also were given a brochure showing them what testing equipment would be used during the study.

Buechi said the current use of the site, for recreational activities such as dirt biking, poses no immediate health risks to residents.

The mudflats are still a favorite recreation site where residents ride all-terrain vehicles and walk their dogs.

While Karcher didn't get one of the brochures outlining the project, he said he may have heard about contamination there in the past, but didn't remember it.

"I didn't know (the area) was part of Manhattan Project," he said.

He also said he wouldn't have been riding his motorcycle there if he had known the area was contaminated.

"I'm not too happy about that, but I'm still alive," he said.

The Corps is currently putting together a list for people interested in the site, a spokesman said. Those who sign on will get advance notice of meetings as well as news about the site.

To sign up, contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers FUSRAP Public Information Center at 1776 Niagara St., Buffalo, N.Y., 14207, or call 879-4438, or call the toll-free public access line at (800) 833-6390.