

Tests still out on Mudflats, landfill contents

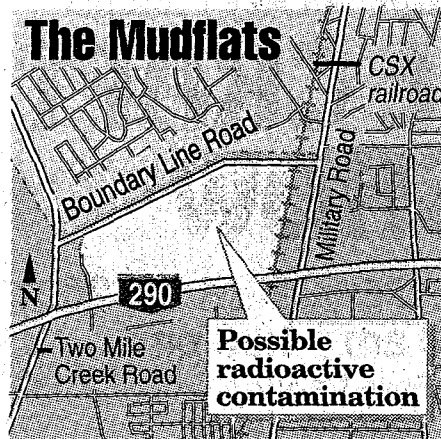
BY JIM CWIERLEY
TONAWANDA NEWS

Residents who live near the Mudflats and former Town of Tonawanda Landfill will have to wait just a little bit longer to find out what's buried in the ground there.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is still waiting for test results, conducted this summer at the popular bike and walking path. Delays at the laboratories where the soil samples were sent are forcing the Corps to hold off its report to the public until mid-February, according to the Corps.

"All of the sample analysis is not yet back," said [REDACTED] a Corps project manager. "It's merely the volume (of samples)."

[REDACTED] said the Corps took 400 soil samples from the Mudflats site, which is bordered by the I-290 to the south, the CSX railroad to the east, the city of Tonawanda to the north and



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East Park Drive to the west. Officials believe it contains uranium, radium and thorium from the development of the atomic bomb during World War II.

"We want to be as comprehensive as possible... to make sure we covered all

the areas," she said.

The samples were sent to three labs in Colorado and South Carolina to be tested for chemical composition and radioactivity, [REDACTED] said. The amount of samples sent, coupled with the amount of other sites being tested around the country, are the main factors contributing to the delay.

"We're still getting data periodically," she said.

A 1991 radiological survey turned up the contaminants, and a 1994 study defined the areas where material was buried. The Corps announced plans to survey the 170-acre tract in early June, but a stretch of hot weather forced work to creep along.

Preliminary reports this summer indicated little impact on human health or the environment, but [REDACTED] said she wanted to wait for the results of the test before issuing findings.

Because of the incomplete information, the first draft of the contamination report is scheduled to be completed by mid-January, with a public report scheduled for release by mid-February.

Fourth Ward Alderman [REDACTED] whose district includes homes that border the Mudflats and former town landfill, said he is pleased to hear results will be released in February.

"I think under the circumstances, with the things going on in the state, I understand why things are backed up," he said. "They're saying February, and I'm happy with that."

[REDACTED] said she didn't believe the delay in testing was caused by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"The lab hasn't indicated that to us," she said.

The labs where the materials were sent dealt primarily with chemical and radioactivity, she said.