

Letters

Trespassers on WVDP property will be prosecuted

Editor:

The Western New York Nuclear Service Center, located in the town of Ashford, is a New York State-owned facility, and currently home to the U.S. Department of Energy's (USDOE) West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP), a multibillion dollar nuclear waste cleanup effort. The laws and agreements that govern this cleanup project give the USDOE the responsibility to manage approximately 200 acres of the 3,300-acre Center, whereas the remainder property is managed by our organization, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA).

NYSERDA's mission statement for the Center directs us "to protect the environment and the

well-being of our workers and neighbors," and our dedicated staff takes this responsibility very seriously.

The majority of the Center land is undeveloped and contains hazards that range from open, dug wells to fallen trees and debris to possible radiological and nonradiological contamination. The area is surrounded by a two-strand, barbed-wire fence that displays "Posted" signs at regular intervals.

Individuals who enter the Center property, without NYSERDA permission or an escort, can be vulnerable to any of these hazards. It is our job to ensure this does not happen.

Every Fall, NYSERDA provides a carefully planned and controlled deer hunting program on certain

areas of the undeveloped portion of the Center allowing preregistered individuals to hunt on the property. At all other times, however, people are prohibited from entering the Center property unless they make prior arrangements with NYSERDA and are accompanied by a NYSERDA escort.

NYSERDA is committed to keeping members of our community safe. Because unauthorized entry onto the property could have serious consequences, we will prosecute individuals who are trespassing on the Center property.

Thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation.

Paul Bembia,
West Valley Site Management
Program Director

Old maps showed costly risks ahead for Route 219 extension

Should have alerted state to unstable soil

By John F. Bonfatti NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Updated: 08/03/08 10:11 AM

Landslides that will significantly increase the cost of the state's multimillion-dollar extension of the Route 219 expressway were foreshadowed in 1979 and 1989, according to geological maps obtained by The Buffalo News.

The maps have critics questioning the state Department of Transportation's assertion in February that it could not have predicted the unstable soil conditions that interrupted construction last summer south of Springville.

"As a taxpayer, I'm very disappointed," said John Schenne, an East Aurora geologist and civil engineer. "I would think on a job this size, the original designers would have had their act together."

"It really makes you question what kind of preliminary research was done into the whole thing," said Erie County Legislator Kathy Konst, D-Lancaster, who is running for the State Senate in the district where the landslide occurred.

Fixing the problem will cost more than the \$15 million the department estimated in February, Skip Carrier, DOT spokesman acknowledged. He could not say how much more.

Carrier said the state was "aware of the potential for ground movement discussed in" the 1979 map, produced by a prominent Albany-area earth scientist before the soon-to-come West Valley Demonstration Project.

But he insisted the department could not have foreseen the extent of the problem.

"What I think we were aware of was shallow ground movements," he said. "What we encountered was

something far different. It was much deeper.”

The information contained in the 1979 map is reflected in a map titled “Landslide Inventory Map of New York,” put out 10 years later by geologists from the state and U. S. Geological Surveys and available from the State Museum.

That map describes a region about two miles southwest of Springville as an “area of slumping and landsliding where individual slides are too numerous to map.”

The DOT’s internal report on the landslides included a suggested fix. A Federal Highway Administration peer review of that remedy, which was due Friday, has been delayed two weeks.

A spokesman for the Highway Administration initially said the state DOT requested an extension on the Friday deadline. He then said he had misspoken and said the request had come from the peer review panel.

The DOT’s report on the landslides, 100 feet below the surface along Scoby Hill Road, laid out four potential solutions. The most expensive option, which was rejected, would have cost \$65 million to \$80 million.

When work began last summer, the total cost of the 4.2- mile extension from Route 39 to near Peters Road in Ashford was pegged at \$85.7 million, including two \$11 million bridges over the Cattaraugus Creek gorge. The cost now is about \$109 million, according to Carrier.

Another potential fix, a solution the report says was “initially recommended” by the engineers, would have cost \$35 million to \$45 million.

That remedy “was rejected by the department from further consideration” in favor of a solution for which no cost range was listed, the report said. The preferred solution “has the lowest initial cost and the least impact on the project schedule.”

The preferred solution “would reduce, but not completely eliminate slide movement,” the report states, and “roadway maintenance or reconstruction would be required periodically.”

Don Nowak, a civil engineer and vocal critic of the project whose Ellicottville property lies in the projected path of the expressway extension, said that means the highway will buckle periodically.

Carrier said drivers will not be in danger.

“Motorists’ safety is paramount,” he said. “We anticipate there will be gradual creep movements. We do not anticipate sudden, large movements that would jeopardize traveler safety.”

As it is, the section under construction between Route 39 and Peters Road, originally scheduled for completion next summer, won't be done until at least summer 2010.

Although the highway extension has the support of numerous politicians and business owners, its future remains up in the air. No funds have been allocated for the 24-mile section south of Peters Road.

And the Seneca Nation of Indians, which has a contentious relationship with the state over land taken for highways, has not given permission to bring the highway through its lands in and around Salamanca.

Konst said she does not necessarily oppose the extension but is concerned that the push to build it might compromise motorist safety.

“If you're going to build it, and that's not the place, then maybe we need to go back and find out . . . what we have to do, rather than throwing money into a solution that may not be a solution,” she said.

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- 2008 The Buffalo News.

ASHFORD

Meeting scheduled Tuesday for West Valley Project

Updated: 08/04/08 6:37 AM

ASHFORD — Information about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Decommissioning the West Valley Demonstration Project and a former nuclear fuel reprocessing facility there will be presented during the West Valley Demonstration Project's quarterly public meeting at 6:30 p. m. Tuesday in the Ashford Office Complex, 9030 Route 219.

The Draft EIS is expected to be released in December by the Department of Energy and the State Energy Research and Development Authority. The public will be invited to comment on the document in a six-month review. For information, call 942-4610.

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Posted on Mon, Aug. 4, 2008

Nukes can't work, Sen. McCain

By BRUCE MOLHOLT

TODAY, nuclear power is being heavily touted as an answer to global warming, not only by the nuclear industry but by some political candidates, most notably John McCain, who advocates building 100 nuclear plants in the U.S., 45 in the next 22 years.

It's been nearly 30 years since the accident at Three Mile Island, just south of Harrisburg, which essentially killed nuclear power development in the U.S. No new plants have been planned or built in the U.S. since the March 1979 accident.

Although the accident was less severe than the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, an estimated 95 percent of the reactor core melted and containment was breached within an inch of the infamous "China syndrome." This catastrophe occurs when molten uranium fuel and a myriad of radioactive byproducts leak into groundwater and release highly radioactive steam into the air for hundreds of miles around, depending on wind speed and direction.

It's true that, unlike coal or natural-gas fired plants, nuclear reactors don't emit carbon dioxide - a major contributor to global warming. But nuclear power is still hardly "clean." There has been a dismal failure of the industry and government to solve the dirtiest aspect of nuclear power - the production of 30 tons of highly radioactive wastes per year for each reactor.

Over the years, the U.S. has tried to deal with highly toxic radioactive wastes in spent fuel in several different ways: Spent fuel reprocessing, long-term disposal of spent fuel at Yucca Mountain, Nev., and long-term storage of spent fuel on-site.

Each method has proven untenable and portends potential widescale health hazards even with the present U.S. total of 104 nuclear plants, let alone Sen. McCain's proposal to essentially double that number.

We tried spent fuel reprocessing at West Valley, N.Y., south of Buffalo, in 1966-72. During that six

years, the plant reprocessed only a year's worth of spent nuclear fuel from 21 reactors.

It is now permanently closed due to poor performance, environmental contamination and exposure of workers to dangerously high levels of radiation. The environmental cleanup tab alone has reached \$5 billion.

In 1982, Congress approved a national spent-fuel repository at Yucca Mountain, 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Now, 26 years and \$60 billion later, DOE estimates that this long-term repository may begin accepting an estimated 70,000 tons of spent fuel within the next 20 years or so. In the meantime, the nation's 104 nuclear plants will continue to store spent fuel on-site.

While on-site storage of spent fuel was meant to be a temporary fix, closure of West Valley and delays at Yucca Mountain have forced the industry to adopt longer-term measures. The annual nuclear waste at each reactor is 30 tons. Initially, these wastes were put into pools of water on-site.

ADEQUATE space was allotted between the fuel assemblies and the radioactive water is circulated to keep the assemblies from overheating. But as the pools became more crowded, the risks increased. About a decade ago, the pools became so crammed that the industry began using dry-cask storage.

There are two types of dry casks for on-site storage of spent nuclear fuel - above- and belowground. These stainless-steel casks are hot and are cooled via natural air circulation (above-ground) or fans (underground).

Since no highly radioactive spent fuel has left any U.S. nuclear plant for 36 years, it's estimated that most plants now have in excess of 1,000 tons of it on-site.

If a "China syndrome" were to occur at one of these plants and molten fuel were to disrupt the storage pools or dry-cask areas, the release of radioactivity could be 10 times greater than Chernobyl, where the entire radioactive core evaporated. (In addition, these massive highly concentrated sources of toxic radioactivity are prime targets for terrorism.)

Yes, nuclear is clean in that it doesn't emit carbon dioxide. But the dirty little secret of radioactive wastes is that they are highly toxic, last for millennia and nobody wants them.

In a sane society, energy development would emphasize solar, wind and geothermal, which are actually clean in every aspect. *

Bruce Molholt is a toxicologist in West Chester.

Buzz this story.

ASHFORD

Meeting to discuss W. Valley options

By Kathy Kellogg CATTARAUGUS CORRESPONDENT

Updated: 08/05/08 6:47 AM

ASHFORD — An information session will be held at 6:30 p. m. today in the Ashford Office Complex to describe the general contents of a draft environmental impact study on options for closing the West Valley Demonstration Project and a former commercial nuclear fuels reprocessing facility.

The presentation during the Energy Department's quarterly public meeting will focus on the study to be released in December for a six-month public review and comment period.

The statement, which has not been completed, will outline and compare the effects of four suggested decommissioning and/or long-term stewardship alternatives for the 3,000-acre property.

The Energy Department prefers the phased decision-making option, which would involve removing some of the most contaminated structures, lagoons and the source of a radioactive groundwater plume. Cleanup decisions and removal of a highly radioactive waste tank farm, a construction and demolition debris landfill and a licensed burial ground would be put aside until a series of evaluations are complete.

A state-owned burial ground would be managed, as now, for as long as 30 years.

Decisions on the decommissioning or long-term management method would be made in Phase 2.

Another option would call for cleaning the entire site to the level of unrestricted use, while a third would close key facilities and leave them in place, while containing long-lived radioactive facilities in special structures.

The fourth option would take no decommissioning action but continue oversight of the portions of the center and demonstration project which have not been removed.

Comments will be received through next June, and a final draft of the study will be released in October 2009. The Energy Department is expected to make a final decision by late next year. The state Energy Research and Development Agency will decide what to do about the state-licensed burial ground.

The office complex is located at 9030 Route 219.



LOVE CANAL: Former residents return to site with a message

By Dan Miner
E-mail Dan
Niagara Gazette

August 04, 2008 04:52 pm



If it weren't for the barren lots where homes once stood, it might have felt like old times at Love Canal. Lois Gibbs and members of her organization, the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, addressed a throng of reporters Friday morning near the corner of 100th Street and Colvin Boulevard. Several former residents of the neighborhood were there also.

The occasion was the 30th anniversary of the first state of emergency declaration in the neighborhood. On Aug. 2, 1978, state Health Commissioner Robert Whalen ordered the closure of the 99th Street School and recommended the evacuation of pregnant women and young children.

Eventually, more than 950 families were relocated and 350 homes and the school were demolished as the situation generated local outcry and national headlines. It prompted a federal state of emergency declaration from President Jimmy Carter on Aug. 7, 1978, and was the inspiration for both the state and federal Superfund programs.

A 70-acre fenced cap over the original 16-acre landfill now covers the site of the former canal, where Hooker Chemical Company dumped nearly 22,000 tons of toxic waste from 1942 to 1953.

Years of testing, cleanup and studies ensued in the wake of the initial reports. The widespread publicity made former resident Gibbs, the most outspoken of the neighborhood residents and former president of the Love Canal Homeowners Association, a household name. And it made Love Canal infamous.

But 30 years later, the people who did so much when Love Canal became an issue aren't sitting back and reminiscing. The problems don't only exist in the past, they say.

Walking in Friday's procession was 30-year old Renee Retton, a Ransomville resident whose family lived on 100th Street.

"I'm trying to carry on Lois' fight and involve kids from the area," said Retton, who is attending Niagara County Community College for a nursing degree.

Retton, whose younger sister died at child birth before the family moved out of the area and whose father was just diagnosed with cancer, spoke of the need to continue testing on residents. A press release at the event said she plans to

follow in Gibbs' footsteps and make environmental advocacy her life's work.

There too was Luella Kenny, whose young child, Jon, died in October 1978 from an immune response disease. After that, she became a prominent voice urging government action in the area, logging the condition of the creeks behind her house.

One day in 1979, after she'd submitted written testimony in state Supreme Court to protest the manner of some cleanup work there, a toxicologist came to her house to view the creek. While he was watching, a bird landed and took a drink of water. Then it dropped dead.

"They put that bird in the freezer that was in my house," said Kenny, who had moved away from the house at that time. "I never used that freezer again."

Gibbs and scientist Stephen Lester used the occasion to cast doubt on a state Department of Health draft health study, released in 2006, the goal of which was to track and document negative health consequences on former residents of the neighborhood.

Among Gibbs and Lester's criticisms are that the study is an incomplete portrait because it does not address health problems of residents while they lived in the area and includes only a fraction of the neighborhood's residents.

"The health department had a very limited method from the beginning," said Lester, CHEJ's science director and a state on-site science expert at Love Canal in the late 1970s. "The biggest criticism is it's computer-generated data. It doesn't involve people."

To the north of the landfill is a thriving neighborhood, the site of once-abandoned homes that has been repopulated and now looks much as it once did, with working class homeowners and their children.

To Patty Grenzy, who once lived at 793 100th St., that isn't a good thing.

"I was floored and shocked they resold those homes," Grenzy said. "I was enraged because if anybody did their homework you could see their homes are still contaminated."

Underground swales connect the landfill to a creek which run through the neighborhood, she said.

That sentiment was echoed by Gibbs who said homeowners were "bamboozled" into buying cheap homes there.

At the very least, the state Department of Health and federal Environmental Protection Agency should do health studies there to determine if people are being harmed by contamination, Gibbs said.

A spokesman for the EPA said many studies and cleanups have been done in that area and that the state ordered the area safe in 1988 after rigorous testing.

"We would have not ever recommended the homes relivable if it weren't that the state Department of Health determined the areas west of the canal and north of Colvin were suitable for rehabilitation," the spokesman, Mike Basile, said.

Later Friday, a reception and program at the VFW Post 917 on Seneca Avenue featured a series of speakers, including local and state officials. One notable portion of the evening was the announcement of CHEJ's "Love Canals of Today," which included the Bethlehem Steel site in Buffalo, CWM Chemical Services in Lewiston and Porter, FMC in Middleport and the West Valley nuclear site outside Buffalo.

When asked how they were nominated, Gibbs smiled.

"They nominated themselves," she said.

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WEST VALLEY

Review of impact report to begin in December

By Kathy Kellogg CATTARAUGUS CORRESPONDENT

Updated: 08/06/08 6:45 AM

ASHFORD — Two of the West Valley Demonstration Project's 2009 quarterly public meetings could be used to provide information or review topics contained in an upcoming draft environmental impact study on closing options for the West Valley Demonstration Project and a former commercial nuclear fuels reprocessing facility.

Jon Chamberlain of the Department of Energy told residents and staffers in attendance Tuesday at the August quarterly meeting that the gatherings could be useful during a six-month public review of the document to begin in December.

He said the meetings began as the result of a West Valley Coalition lawsuit settlement that required the DOE's preparation of the impact study, but could be an opportunity to help people obtain information and answer questions about the document before a June 2009 deadline for comments will end.

"Everyone should bring ideas of who to bring in to talk, or any ideas that could make the meetings be functional," said Chamberlain, looking ahead to the 2009 series of meetings.

Chamberlain's comments came after a presentation by Cathy Bohan, an environmental compliance officer for the DOE who explained that participants in the review could find specific information in the document.

The impact study will be released to the public in December. It lists four alternatives for the 3,000-acre property. In one option the entire site would be cleaned so future uses would be unrestricted, and another method would close key facilities in place, sealing long-lived radioactive facilities in containment structures.

The DOE's preference is the phased decision-making option, which would remove some of the most dangerous items, but would postpone other decisions until environmental evaluations were completed. The New York State energy and Research Development Authority's (NYSERDA) preferred alternative involves its state-owned licensed burial ground. NYSERDA hopes it would be managed, as now, for as long as 30 years. Decisions on the final disposition of other structures and wastes would take place during Phase 2.

NYSERDA's report on the impact study and the other evaluations will be included as a special section, along with a risk assessment for the state-owned disposal area. Paul Bembia of NYSERDA told the group this report would help participants in the review to assess the preferred alternatives.

Judy Einach, a member of the West Valley Citizen Task Force and director of the West Valley Coalition said after the meeting that she felt the impact study would be released “whether it is ready or not” because the DOE is under pressure to produce it as a result of the court’s order in the Coalition lawsuit. She said the coalition is pursuing a federal appeal of another lawsuit alleging the impact study process is in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

The public will have a chance to comment in writing through June 2009, with a final impact statement to be based on those comments and issued in October 2009. The DOE will make its decision by late next year and NYSERDA will decide the long-term fate of the state-licensed burial ground.

2008 The Buffalo News.

Springville Journal, Thursday, August 7, 2008

WVSB educated in clean up possibilities at WVDP

By RENEE HANLEY
Journal Correspondent

West Valley School Board member Stephen Kowalski, acting as the school's liaison, submitted an extensive PowerPoint presentation of the West Valley Citizen Task Force. The Task Force is involved in giving advice to federal and state agencies involved in cleaning up the West Valley nuclear waste Demonstration Project. The agencies have proposed four different alternatives for handling the site. One option is site-wide removal, which would include cleanup and release of the entire site. Another alternative, called close-in-place, would consist of all contamination being capped and sealed. A third possibility is for no action to take place. The site would be monitored but no further clean up would commence.

Kowalski informed the Board that, "Since 1980 we've been waiting for an environmental impact statement that is going to lead to what choices will be made".

The Department of Energy (DOE), New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Department of Health (DOH), Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and others involved in this site put

West Valley School Board meeting...

(Continued from Page 1)

together a core team to deal with technical issues to figure out the best plan for the future of the project.

"They came up with what they thought was the best option, where we would deal with what can be dealt with now and defer other decisions off into the future, technically a 30-year period," said Kowalski.

What the core team refers to as "The Way Ahead" is a fourth alternative of phased decision making. Phase I would include the removal of the main plant and the vitrification facility. The source area of the North Plateau groundwater plume would also be removed. No decommissioning or long-term management decisions would be made for the waste tank farm during this phase and the covered disposal area would not be exhumed. Nothing done under Phase I would hinder a full clean up at a later date.

Phase II would complete the decommissioning of the site. Under the plan, the decommissioning would take place between 2011 and 2018 and include processing of two million cubic feet of dirt. High level waste canisters would be relocated to an onsite,

shipping-ready storage facility.

A draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding the site is due in December of this year, followed by a six-month public comment period. Comments will then be compiled and resolved through October 2009, when a final EIS would be submitted. In December 2009, a Record of Decision and Statement of Finding would be released by the NRC. Any progress made in waste removal and/or site cleanup is contingent on DOE funding.

In other news,

- Vietnam Veteran Richard "Dick" Neumann was bestowed his High School Diploma by Ed Ahrens and the WVCS Board of Education at the opening of their July 29 meeting. According to a new law, veterans who had to interrupt their education in order to provide military service are now eligible to receive a diploma. Several of Neumann's family members were present at the surprise presentation.

- Curriculum Coordinator Bonnie Smith discussed the status of the pre-kindergarten program, which is in the process of transitioning from a Targeted Pre-K to a Universal Pre-K program.

The staff will be reduced from three to two individuals and ef-

forts are being made to notify all eligible students. Children who turn four years old by December 1 qualify for the Pre-K program. Students may possibly be located via a new census, day-care centers, fliers sent to medical offices, search of school records, One-Call WEB phone calls, and advertising in local papers. Budget allocations are dependent on the amount of children enrolled in the Pre-K program.

- Financial Officer Michael Chudy offered an explanation of current tax warrant calculations for Ashford and neighboring towns. The tax warrant was approved.

- A contract for Dr. Christine Khanna allowing her to apply for funding and to administer the "Learn and Serve America" grant was approved.

- A special Board of Education meeting on August 5 to vote on a vacant BOCES seat was approved.

- The school's cafeteria service is operating at a loss. Options to resolve this issue will be investigated.

- The meeting was adjourned to an Executive Session with no further business to follow. The next regular BOE is scheduled for August 11 at the school.

WEST VALLEY PROJECT

Cancer rife in group seeking cash settlements

By Kathy Kellogg CATTARAUGUS CORRESPONDENT

Updated: 08/10/08 12:04 PM

West Valley Demonstration Project employees and former employees have been comparing notes as they help each other obtain cash settlements under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act of 1990. What they have learned is unsettling.

Most of the 15 members of the organization, dubbed the West Valley Nuclear Compensation Group, who met Friday in Concord Town Hall for only the second time, have either been treated for cancer, have recently been diagnosed with it or have lost a spouse to the disease.

At the meeting, Judy Einach and Joanne Hameister, of the West Valley Coalition, explained that many have been waiting years for their claims to be processed but that more people should file claims. They said they have a long list of names of co-workers who have cancer and are directing the blame toward the Department of Energy and elected officials for not helping them obtain \$150,000 in settlements and medical costs.

As of Tuesday, just 17 employees or their spouses had been paid a total of \$2,454,314 — out of an eligible group of 142 claimants, according to the U. S. Department of Labor.

Members of the support group learned about the program through word of mouth, and one received an official letter notifying him of the chance to apply.

They want to find ill co-workers and those who may have moved away after being laid off from the project.

They said they will begin a campaign to receive help from elected officials. A staffer for Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N. Y., has asked for specifics, names of claimants, reasons for denial and proof of exposure.

Lori Nason, whose job in a warehouse was eliminated recently, doesn't have cancer but learned her dosimeter badge once registered exposure to radiation while she sat unaware in her office — just 50 feet from a carload of highly radioactive casks ready for shipment and disposal. She said she never saw a written report of the incident.

Nason joined the group to support founders Sue Klein, a widow of a warehouse worker who died in January of lung cancer at age 54, and Cheley Ghani, whose husband also worked in the warehouse and died at 48, just a week

later. The three women said they know at least half of the roughly 16 warehouse workers who now have cancer or died from it.

Some members pointed to the region's high incidence of thyroid disease, which they believe stems from the 1993-1997 period of documented releases of ionizing radiation during a process to solidify high-level liquid wastes.

Several claimants say the claim requirements can be tough: proof of 250 days of employment in the Department of Energy and over a 50 percent reasonable belief that their cancer can be traced to a radiation accident.

"I think I'm the only case with a doctor's excuse," said Robert Timmel, an operator who believes his rare, slowly progressing leukemia began in 2002, when he encountered airborne radiation while preparing to drain a large pool holding spent fuel rods.

The group's next meeting will be at 6 p. m. Sept. 19 in Concord Town Hall, Springville.

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Love Canal's Lessons

(08/08/2008)

by Lois Ann Zendarski, President
Concerned Citizens of Cattaraugus County

I was honored to be one of the attendees at the Center for Health & Environmental Justice event held at VFW Post 917 in Niagara Falls on August 1st. This organization's director is Lois Gibbs, the woman who was mad as heck and led the fight in blowing the whistle on what was happening in Love Canal, (Niagara Falls, NY), 30 years ago. Through her, the truth became known about the 200,000 tons of chemicals that had been dumped in her neighborhood.

The mayor of Niagara Falls, Paul Dyster spoke, applauding those who work to keep the environment safe. His home town, because of environmentalists like Lois Gibbs, is known as the birthplace of modern environmentalism.



The banquet hall at the VFW Post in Niagara Falls was filled to capacity with environmental activists from all over Western New York and beyond. Speakers having first hand knowledge of the atrocities of landfills and environmental problems came to the podium one by one.

The group heard from steelworkers and their families at Bethlehem Steel in Lackawanna, NY, some of whom worked rolling enriched uranium. Cancer is affecting those working on the Manhattan Project because of exposure to radiation. It took decades for the federal government to acknowledge that thousands of workers were exposed to dangerous levels of radiation while handling materials to be used in making nuclear weapons in the 1940s.

Lewiston is host to the CWM landfill that imports PCBs from 30 states. This toxic and radioactive landfill wants to expand, continuing to stockpile chemical waste just a few miles from the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. CWM has contaminated creeks that run through residential areas, parks and the Great Lakes. Grassroots groups are fighting back opposing CWM application to expand its facility. FMC pesticide site in Middleport, NY is one of the largest waste facilities in the US. You will find agent orange and agent purple, (another powerful herbicide and defoliant), there. Did you know that there was a large bird kill in Middleport due to exposure to these chemicals, affecting thousands of birds--the same chemical that killed thousands in Bhopal, India? FMC wants an above ground landfill on their site for storage of soils and wastes from temporary cleanups. We were told the landfill would be situated 100 feet from the school yard fence. United Neighbors Improving Tomorrow's Environment is opposing FMC's application.

West Valley has the potential of being catastrophic if a significant breach occurs, affecting the Great Lakes Watershed. West Valley Nuclear site contains the most complex mix of nuclear and hazardous wastes in the nation. An example was given by West Valley Coalition director, Judy Einach. She said that if a breach occurred, the radioactivity would travel down Cattaraugus Creek to Lake Erie threatening the municipal water supply. What would happen if radioactive water then was pumped onto a burning home? Think about the effects of watering lawns, washing cars or bathing in radioactive contaminated water. A significant breach would render Erie County uninhabitable for centuries. Luella Kenney, a former Love Canal resident, told those attending the event about her son, John. She said that he used to leave "I love you" notes on her dinner plate and on her pillow at night. He wasn't feeling well and was taken to Children's Hospital. His mother was told he "just needed to be monitored". Always concerned about others, John told his grandmother not to worry about him lest her blood pressure get too high.

Luella said that in two months, 7 year old John Kenney was dead because he played in his own backyard in the Love Canal area.

800 FAMILIES were evacuated from Love Canal 30 years ago August 2nd when the NYS Dept of Health declared a state of emergency. The 99th Street School was closed, and a cleanup plan was ordered to address the leaking toxic dumpsite. Some families left the area all together. Some moved to Wheatfield and the surrounding area. (My husband recalls knowing some of these families personally.) Those from the Love Canal area have a higher risk of lung, kidney and bladder cancer. Children have 2 times the rate of having a birth defected child.

Lois Gibbs told the group that regular folks can be a part of social change. You don't have to be rich. You don't have to be highly educated. People can make the difference. She said that Love Canal should never be forgotten because if we close the book on Love Canal, the same thing can and will happen again. She urged everyone to be diligent, watchful and involved.

We, in Cattaraugus County have avoided a potential Love Canal in our backyard. Hundreds of people have worked for nearly two decades to make sure that there aren't similar horror stories to tell of in OUR backyard. It doesn't take much to become active, but it does take YOU! Be informed, stay informed and help to be a part of keeping your neighborhoods safe for generations to come.

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OBITUARIES



August 14, 2008

TOP STORY NEWS SPORTS EDITORIAL AROUND TOWN FEATURED SECTION



Top Story

West Valley Demonstration Project cancer claimants being denied compensation

By NATALIE CONDOR-SMITH
Journal Correspondent

A group of 15 cancer victims, survivors, relatives and friends who worked or who are still working at the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) were expecting to see Senator Chuck Schumer at their meeting held last Friday. But Susanne Klein, whose husband died of cancer at age 54 after working for 18 years in the warehouse, explained that an earlier phone call said neither he nor a representative would be attending, but that they could send him the minutes.

"I am quite outraged," she said. "We elect these people to do a job for us and we're never heard."

The recently started meetings came about because of an apparently little-known compensation program called The Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act, which became effective on July 1, 2001 and which is administered by the US Department of Labor (DOL), Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). Part B of the Act was enacted to provide compensation to workers with beryllium disease, silicosis, or radiation induced cancer. Employees, or their survivors, whose claims are approved may receive a lump-sum payment of \$150,000 and medical benefits for the covered illness. The group of current and past employees and their families refer to themselves as the West Valley Nuclear Compensation Support Group.

The problem seems to be that many of the claims made are being denied because there is a formula which apparently states that a claim can be denied to claimants or deceased claimants' families if it is estimated that exposure to radiation from the worksite was less than 50 percent. In other words, the dose estimate is used by the OWCP to determine whether the cancer was at least as likely as not related to the covered employment. The determination is made based upon guidelines developed by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and incorporated into an interactive computer program that the OWCP uses to calculate the probability that a claimant's cancer was caused by exposure to radiation. If the percentage likelihood of radiation related disease is less than 50, claims are being denied.

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Criteria include where the employee worked at the site, length of employment and medical information. According to many in the group, this formula is flawed because not all employees wore a radiation detection badge, known as a dosimetry badge, at all times in all areas of the facility.

In many cases, they were told it was not necessary to wear one in areas that had been designated as 'safe', such as the warehouse. One of Susanne Klein's questions was: "If my husband worked in the warehouse and was told it was safe, why was the warehouse demolished and removed in a radiation dumpster when he was told there was no radiation in the warehouse?"

In addition, many current and past employees who have made claims have been unable to obtain records of exactly when beryllium dust, particles or vapor may have been present at the facility.

Another example pertains to the group's spokesman, Bob Timmel, who is now 49 and was diagnosed with a malignant lymphoma at age 44. His doctor wrote to the DOL stating, "It is my direct belief that the disease was propagated environmentally from his exposure to nuclear waste at the physical plant. He has no other significant medical and/or family history suggestive of a predisposition to this disease." When he asked for his dosimetry badge information, he was told he could not have it because "he did not work in a radiation field," Timmel said. His claim has been denied.

Dave Hawkins worked in the decommissioning and decontamination area of the facility. NIOSH said his claim was only 41 percent likely to have been caused by airborne radiation. According to NIOSH, despite '18 uptakes' which means that when you breathe in radioactive material, you have a radioactive signature in your body. Hawkins has had pancreatic cancer for the past 4.5 years. His claim has been denied.

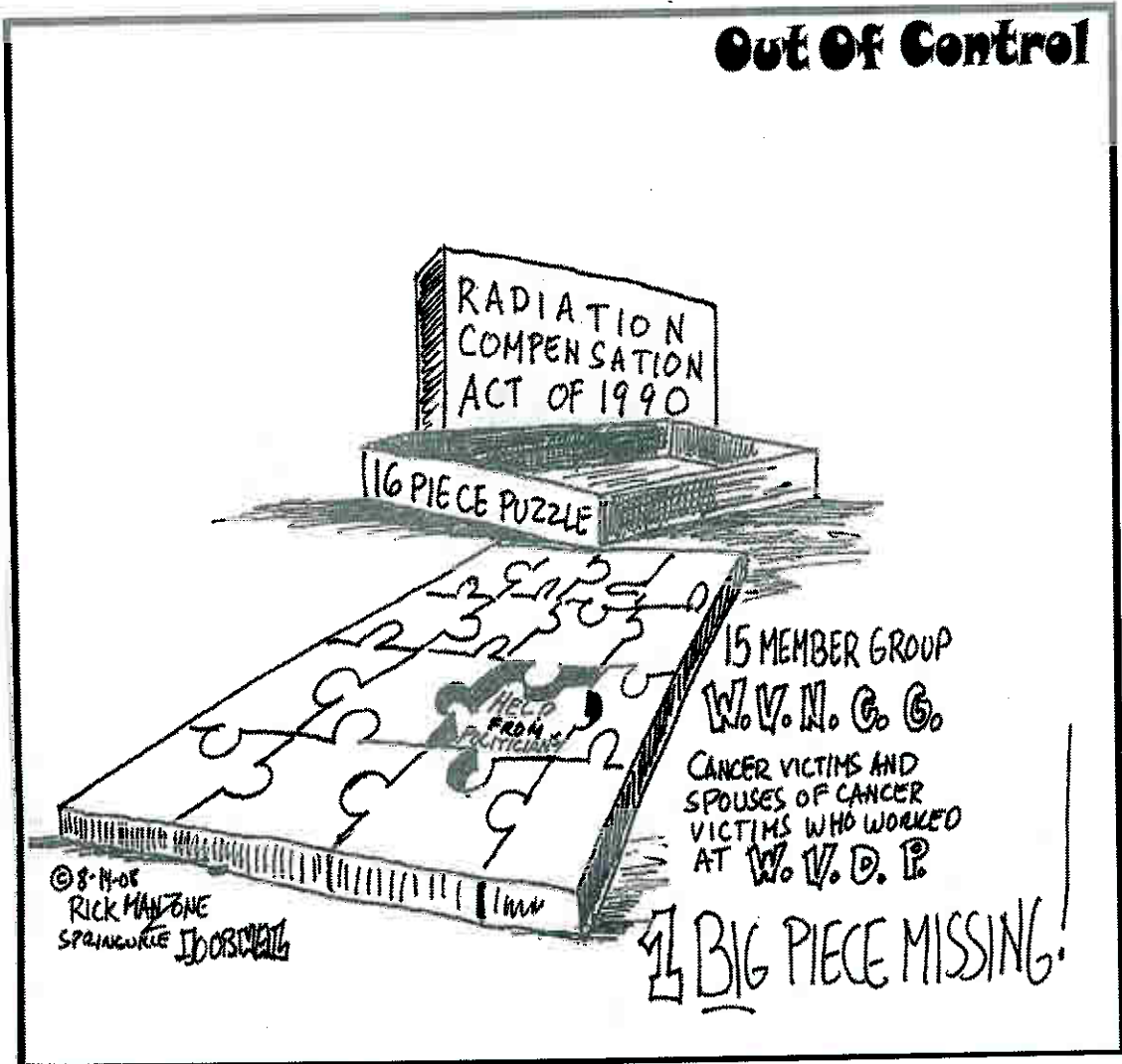
Chris Fallon, 44, is a former Ronco subcontractor who worked at WVDP from 1991 to 1996 as a site engineer. At the age of 31, he was diagnosed by the Roswell Cancer Institute with testicular cancer and then, at the age of 34, he was diagnosed with kidney cancer. Fallon said, "My doctors said they have never seen someone so young with both these cancers." When he asked for his records showing what his exposure was, he was told by the WVDP Human Resources Department that they don't keep records on contractors. Fallon doesn't hold out much hope that his claim will be approved because he only has 30 days in which to gather all the required information such as dates, times, what work he did and in what building when he worked at the site in the 1990's. "It's disheartening," he said.

Both Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Chuck Schumer have been active in opposing efforts to weaken the cleanup standards at West Valley. In fact, according to Timmel, he believes Schumer was one of the individuals who cosponsored the original bill. "You can't sponsor a bill and then do nothing. Why aren't you helping?," he asks.

Now the group is actively pursuing the offices of both Schumer and Clinton to get help with their concerns and getting their claims processed. If you or a family member works or has worked at West Valley Demonstration Project and have questions, you can send an e-mail to wvncsg@yahoo.com.

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Out Of Control





United Way Day of Caring for SYI

By MITCHELL LAW
Journal Reporter

A joint project between the Boy Scouts and West Valley Demonstration Project workers resulted in the “beautification” of Springville Youth Incorporated Community Park.

About 30 volunteers from WVDP worked on maintenance and other tasks at Community Park for United Way’s Day of Caring. Also, Eagle Scout Paul Foster led Boy Scouts in a project to build a raised flower planter with architectural stones filled with perennials at the park’s entrance.

Money for the project was donated by retired U.S. Navy Vice Admiral Albert Konetzni who is the President of West Valley Environmental Services, L.L.C. Workers helped the Boy Scouts to create the planter as well as spread new gravel in the driveway to the park, painted a shelter, fence and bike rack and also fixed a broken split rail fence.

“We performed a variety of maintenance and upkeep projects,” said Barry Lester, worker at West Valley. He noted that another 30 workers met at Delevan Head Start to work there also. In previous years, WVDP has participated in A Day of Caring in a variety of locations throughout Southern Erie and Northern Cattaraugus Counties.



Springville Journal, Thursday, August 21, 2007

Cattaraugus County honors couple for service to WVFD

By MITCHELL LAW
Journal Reporter

Wayne McNeil, a longtime member of the West Valley Fire Department and his wife Nevella, received awards recently for their service to the community.

On Saturday, July 19 the Cattaraugus County Firemen's Association presented the awards to Wayne for Fireman of the Year and to his wife Nevella, a President's award for non-fireperson.

Mary Crandall of the West Valley Fire Department also received an award for EMT provider of the year.

Wayne said he has been a member of the West Valley Fire Department since 1979, "the building years" as he calls it.

The old fire hall, which is now the town's Community Center, was sold in the mid 1980s. During that time, the firemen in West Valley decided to build a hall on Route 219 and one on Route 240. Also built was a banquet facility which is the farmers memorial hall.

"We bought the property in the early 90s and then started building the fire hall in 1995," he noted. Wayne has held positions as Fire Police Captain, Vice President and Treasurer.

"I gave those up for younger people to have a chance," Wayne said, adding "I encourage them, 'it's a volunteer activity.'

He also encourages them to take all the training they can get.

Wayne helps with events for the fire hall such as the most famous Barrier Farm Hill Climb, which usually is held on Labor Day. Last year was the end of the Hill Climb for the West Valley Fire Department.

"I spent a lot of time on it," Wayne said, adding he worked on the timing for the dirt bike racers.

Currently Wayne helps with the other fundraisers such as the ham and turkey raffle and the sportsmen raffle.

"I call myself an event committee chairperson," Wayne said.

His most memorable moments were working with Morris Gentner who “was a strong leader and it was interesting working with him.”

“It was under his leadership and ideas that got us where we are with the different fire halls and property,” he added.

Humbly he said there were probably others who were more qualified or equally qualified for the award. Wayne is very proud of his wife Nevella who was awarded for non-fireperson.

“She has never been a member but you would think she is,” Wayne said. “She has done as much for the town as I have.”

Nevella is very active in the West Valley community working with the Girl Scouts, a member of the **Citizens Task Force** and “she’s always helping out the fire department doing landscaping and whatever is needed,” Wayne told the Journal on Friday, Aug. 15.

Wayne remembers the Springville fires which West Valley responded to a mutual aid call such as Gramco, The Leland House, Bob’s News and Julies Pizzeria.

“Quite a few fires,” he noted.

In West Valley there have been a lot of barn fires and late night calls.

“That’s all part of the job,” he noted, adding, “A lot of fire police activity with ice storms and bad accidents.”

Wayne has been featured in the Arcade Herald and the Olean Times Herald for his Firefighter of the Year award. Wayne will also appear in the West Valley Fire Department’s newsletter.

“It’s a nice time in my life to get an award like that. I will be proud to show it.”

Correction

In the article “West Valley Demonstration Project cancer claimants being denied compensation,” Bob Timmel said he does not know if in fact Senator Chuck Schumer was one of the individuals who co-sponsored the original bill as was stated in the article.

Craneridge and Kissing Bridge could share waste treatment plant

By PATTI CECALA
Journal Editor

A shared services grant could be used to do a feasibility study to combine two waste water treatment plants, one located at Craneridge, the other at Kissing Bridge.

Concord Supervisor Gary Eppolito said at the August 14 Board meeting, that the Craneridge treatment plant went on-line about 1975.

“Nothing’s ever been done to upgrade or improve it. It’s getting old, it’s running out of its life expectancy.”

Eppolito said he wanted to look into the possibility of merging the two special use districts.

“Kissing Bridge is on one side. Its a special use district for waste water and sewage and serves only about 28 (properties),” explained Eppolito.

“Right down the road about 500 yards there is the Craneridge one that serves about 200 properties.” After the proposed feasibility study is complete, the board would continue into phase two by looking for grant money from Rural Water.

“It’s approaching 40 years, that’s old for a plant like that,” said Eppolito.

There was some confusion as to whether a local law was needed before they could proceed, and town attorney Mike Barone is going to look into it.

If no local law is needed, the board agreed to have Eppolito contact a grant writer, (the money is already in their budget), to apply for the Shard Services Grant. The grant has to be in by September 15.

Town Board members signed a resolution in opposition of the Rails to Trails Snowmobile/Trail Project obtaining the Buffalo and Pittsburgh Railroad Corridor from Orchard Park to West Valley. Eppolito was angry that the town did not receive a letter from Rails to Trails, yet he heard they said all of the towns were notified and in support of it.

“I did this resolution because I became very concerned when I found out the snowmobile people were campaigning to try to get to use the train lines that are abandoned for snowmobile use,” said Eppolito.

“I was a little irritated because they had a big meeting at Sprague Brook Park, and at that meeting they stated that all towns were on record supporting this. And I had specifically called the club and said we do not support this, we will fight it. I was a little put out by it,” Eppolito added.

The Concord Town supervisor is against the use of the snowmobile club using the rails for several reasons including the fact that police and other emergency personnel don't have the equipment necessary to answer to inevitable emergencies on lengthy rural trails.

He said another reason he is against it is because snowmobile trails already pass through the Town of Concord utilizing public rights-of-way and private property with land owner permission and because the proximity to the **West Valley Demonstration Project** cleanup could create serious security issues for those involved.

Eppolito also wrote in the resolution that such a project would remove property from our tax rolls, forcing all the Town of Concord residents to subsidize this effort.

“No venture of this nature should be undertaken without the full knowledge and support of those whose properties border such a trail,” explained Eppolito.

The resolution will be sent to several government offices.

In other board [news](#):

- Lee Wiedemann submitted a letter to the Town Board explaining his concern about the amount of accidents that are happening at the corner of Sharp Street and Middle Road (three so far this year). He is also concerned about the corner of Sharp and North Buffalo streets.

Eppolito said that Wiedemann would like to see the corners become a four-way stop, and Eppolito agreed.

“These are all county roads, but Lee has a good point. With that in mind, I would like to ask the board to let me forward this letter to the traffic safety engineer.”

The board agreed and Eppolito will be forwarding the letter.

The next regular meeting of the Town of Concord will be held Thursday, Aug. 28 at 7 p.m. in the Concord Town Hall.

LITTLE VALLEY — The Cattaraugus County Legislature budgeted \$6 million more than was needed to meet expenses in 2007, according to an audit of Treasurer Joe Keller's comprehensive financial report for the year.

In the audit report, delivered Wednesday by representatives of the firm Toski, Schaefer & Co. of Williamsville, some of the excess resulted because of savings in the Department of Social Services.

Also, the budget counted on using \$1.5 million from surplus to cover expenses, but that money was not used and the general fund reaped a budgetary surplus of \$1.96 million. Overall, the county's combined funds reported a year-end balance of \$30.72 million, an increase of \$337,946.

The unreserved fund balance of \$22.23 million represents 16.3 percent of the county's total ending fund operating expenditures.

For the first time, the county included its pension liability of \$8.99 million in its 2007 financial report and must, by federal law, begin budgeting for that cost.

“[This means] you have to determine to set up trust account for retirees or look at packages. This year you paid \$3 million for health insurance — your costs will go up and you have to raise taxes for it. You need to take this into account to stabilize the fund balance for tax rates,” said Joe Klimak of Toski, Schaefer.

The report also noted the county nursing homes' enterprise funds will not receive Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements until late in 2008, but some improvement was predicted for the next three years.

The Olean Pines maintains a high occupancy rate but received an infusion of \$1.11 million from the general fund. The Machias Pines experienced a net loss of \$1.31 million.

In another matter, lawmakers agreed to support the abandonment of the 32-mile Buffalo- Pittsburgh Railway roadbed and the creation of a new Erie- Cattaraugus Rail Trail from Orchard Park to West Valley.

The proposal was outlined by Rick LeFeber, executive director of the Cattaraugus Local Development Corporation, an organization which helped convert the Erie Railroad road bed into the Senator Pat McGee Trail that opened in 2005, connecting Salamanca to the village of Cattaraugus trail.

LeFeber said the Buffalo- Pittsburgh section would become the next piece of an extension of the Buffalo-Niagara Greenway toward Ellicottville and beyond to Salamanca and Allegany State Park.

Clean up nuclear waste before creating more

Updated: 09/11/08 6:33 AM

Although I have complained numerous times over lack of coverage of meetings regarding the West Valley Demonstration Project, I am grateful to The News for covering the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works story and the way the advisory board has been treated. It is a disgrace that the Army Corps of Engineers can be so cavalier in its attitude toward citizens and their right to know. Please do not stop pursuing this issue, whether in the Southtowns or the Northtowns.

The fact that we have still, after all these years, not resolved the issue of nuclear waste needs to be broadcast and discussed so that we as a nation address the issue of whether we should make more waste by way of more nuclear power plants. We need to address that issue before we even think about restarting a program that will create more waste that we don't know how to handle, except to watch it for thousands of years so it does not pollute the environment.

Leonore S. Lambert

East Aurora

NYSERDA opens public deer hunting at Nuclear Western New York Service Center

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) will sponsor a public deer hunting program at the Western New York Nuclear Service Center (WNYNSC) in the town of Ashford beginning on October 18. Approximately 2,000 acres of the 3,340-acre facility will be open for the entire archery season and seven days during regular season. Scouting is available on Saturday (October 11) and the following Wednesday (October 15) from 8:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. Check-in/out for Scouting will be at NYSERDA's hunting station, located in the south parking lot of the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP).

NYSERDA's program is open to anyone with a valid 2008-09 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Big Game or Sportsman License, and allows up to 70 hunters (10 hunters per area) to hunt each scheduled day. Preapproval to hunt in archery season is mandatory, with each registered bow hunter being issued a valid 2008 NYSERDA wallet ID card to hunt any day of the season. Archery hunting assignments are on a first-come, first-served basis and check-in/out for Archery will be at the WVDP main gatehouse.

During the Regular season, you may preregister and select one hunting assignment of your choice; walk-ins will be allowed, subject

to availability. Check-in/out for Regular season will be at NYSERDA's hunting station, located in the WVDP's south parking lot. Beginning November 5, hunting assignments for the Regular season will be posted outside NYSERDA's Ashford Office, 9030 Route 219, which is approximately five miles south of Schwartz Road. As in previous years, hunting with a rifle is prohibited (i.e., shotguns only).

2008 application packets will be available on Friday, September 12, in the drop box at NYSERDA's offices and at the main gate of the WVDP. Interested hunters can call the Deer Hunting Information Line (942-9960 ext. 4990), which offers a recorded message on hunting availability throughout the season, and request that an application be mailed to you. Completed registration forms should be mailed to the NYSERDA Deer Hunting Program, 9030 Route 219, West Valley, New York 14171-9799, attention Alita Dueringer, or deposited in NYSERDA's drop box.

The safety of the hunters and the people living near the site boundary is a top priority for NYSERDA. Venison samples collected near the WNYNSC recently have been found to contain elevated radioactivity (i.e., above that of deer harvested away from the Center). The New York State Department of Health has reviewed the sample data and

concluded that these levels of radioactivity do not present a public health hazard. The highest radioactivity found in deer at the WNYNSC is less than 10 percent (7 percent) of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's limit for radioactivity in imported food. A hunter eating 90 pounds of venison from a deer with radioactivity at this level could receive an additional radiation dose of 5 millirem/year. For comparison, a typical radiation dose from a chest x-ray is 10 millirem, and the national average radiation dose to the public from natural and man-made radiation is approximately 360 millirem/year. NYSERDA is providing this information to hunters, neighbors and the general public to ensure that everyone is informed. NYSERDA will be further evaluating (through sampling and analysis) the on-site deer population to ensure the continued safety of the deer hunters and the public.

To inquire about additional deer management permits for use at the WNYNSC, contact the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Note that the site is located in Wildlife Management Unit 9M.

NYSERDA Deer Hunting Dates

Archery: Open all season (October 18 - November 14)--preapproval is mandatory. Regular: November 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21.

Horizon Wind Energy answers questions in Ashford

By RENEE HANLEY
Journal Correspondent

Gary Davidson, a project manager for Horizon Wind Energy, was present to answer questions from citizens and board members during the September 10 Town Board meeting.

When asked to explain the process for developing property, Davidson explained, “We typically approach landowners. We have wind maps, we try to match up wind with nearby transmission [facilities]. At some point, we usually try to introduce ourselves. Our history here in Ashford goes back about five years working with land owners on Dutch Hill.”

Davidson indicated that there are three meteorological (MET) towers, which verify wind resource in an area. In explaining how a wind farm is developed, Davidson said, “Assuming the wind law is in place, we’ll design our projects to conform within the guidelines of that law. We’ll then file an application, explain what the project is, where facilities would be, where turbines would be, where access roads would be, what the impacts of that would be...we’ll try to describe that.”

Davidson informed the board that they are currently doing sound studies to measure ambient noise which can be compared with noise levels after installation of the turbines. Horizon will also do visual simulations that will show the landscape from various vantage points. The application would identify where collection lines would need to be.

“Typically we try to be underground with our collection lines whenever possible. For construction reasons there are some points where we have to go overhead briefly,” he added.

When this information is presented to the town, the town then has the opportunity to decide if the project fits the communities desires. The area around West Valley being explored for wind development by Horizon would be limited to approximately nine to 13 turbines due to the size of the present voltage lines. Davidson said that the size of the turbine used is determined by “the cost of the machine matched up against the wind resource, the performance of the machine in certain wind areas. Some machines might be better to withstand more turbulent type of winds.”

He pointed out that Horizon uses a diverse supply chain for its turbines in order to match the machinery to the wind conditions.

Three representatives of the Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC) organization gave a lengthy presentation during the board meeting regarding a projected trail that could travel through the area. Rick LeFeber, executive director of the Cattaraugus Local Development Corporation; Anne Bergantz, chairperson of the Orchard Park Trails Task Force and Deborah Fenn, a teacher at West Valley school and resident of Orchard Park, summarized the Rails to Trails program and how it could be incorporated in Ashford. According to the committee, the Buffalo-Pittsburgh rail line operated by Conrail has not been in operation since 1994, when an alternate transportation route was chosen. The proposed conversion to a recreational trail would entail the rail bed from Orchard Park to Ashford Junction.

The RTC initiative is to “railbank” the property, which refers to keeping the line and its easements intact. With this method, the corridor is preserved for future use which could include alternate transportation, technical uses such as fiber optics lines, or easy access for water or power transfer. After the Rails to Trails representatives highlighted benefits to communities as well as residents’ worries concerning the trails, they answered questions and received comments from board members. **One of the biggest detriments to extending the trail through Ashford is that the rail spur runs through the WNY Nuclear Service Center property operated by NYSERDA and would be inaccessible. Questions regarding ownership of the property and tax liabilities were also addressed. It would be necessary for a second party other than RTC to manage the trail and take on financial responsibilities. No action was taken at the conclusion of the presentation.**

Other items covered during the board meeting included:

- A tentative budget will be drafted during the September 30 work session.
- **Supervisor Chris Gerwitz received a letter from NYSERDA representative Thomas Attridge regarding deer hunting on the WNY Nuclear Service Center property. The letter noted that although deer harvested on the Center’s property may contain higher than normal levels of radioactivity, the levels are within the FDA’s guidelines and do not present a public hazard. NYSERDA will continue to allow hunting on the property for those with eligible permits.**
- A request was made to spend \$4,000 on reflective address signs for residents, which would be installed in the spring. The board is awaiting additional information on this issue.
- Highway Supervisor Tim Engels reported that he has received estimates for cleaning and painting the plow and wings used for snow removal, which would remove rust and extend the life of the equipment.
- Engels informed the board that the highway department should consider purchasing a roller, as they currently rent one which is not cost effective over the long run.
- The new International truck has arrived and is awaiting name painting. Engels will actively pursue selling the 10-wheeler, which the new truck replaced.
- The next Ashford Town Board meeting is scheduled for October 8 at 7:30 p.m.

U. S. must pursue nuclear power now

Douglas Turner

Updated: 09/22/08 6:44 AM

WASHINGTON — On energy policy, Democrats are offering the nation only Woodstock fetishes like bongos, beads and sideburns instead of solutions to a worsening crisis.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, of Nevada, has already cut funding for the Yucca Mountain, Nev., long-term storage facility for nuclear wastes.

Hunkering down with Reid in the commune last week was House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, of California, whose “energy bill” offered no real avenues for new sources, but plenty of empty comfort for environmental Luddites.

The Democratic presidential candidate, Sen. Barack Obama, of Illinois, promised to shut down Yucca Mountain. He’ll throw away the \$8 billion already spent there. And what will Obama do with the \$27 billion that electrical ratepayers have already collected for its operation?

If Obama is elected, those 275 glass logs holding high-level nuclear waste that are sitting on railroad cars near the West Valley Nuclear Demonstration Project in Cattaraugus County will just stay there. Maybe forever.

Perhaps then the Democrats will start a program to buy used bicycles from the Chinese, and charcoal space heaters for Americans who can’t afford to pay their soaring oil or electric heating bills.

That is, if electricity is a reliable source of energy in New York State in the future. Max Schulz, a researcher for the Empire Center, said demand will so outstrip electric supply in a decade or two in New York State that we may “not be able to turn on the lights.”

New Yorkers already pay the third-highest electricity rates in the nation, after Hawaii and Connecticut, Schulz’s report shows. New York pays 16 cents per kilowatt hour compared to the national average of nine and half cents, and three times the rate in Idaho.

New York's electric rates took a hike after hysteria over the accident at the nuclear plant at Nine Mile Island, Pa., prompted then Gov. Mario Cuomo to shut down the \$6 billion nuclear power plant at Shoreham, Long Island.

Last year his son, State Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, joined then Gov. Eliot Spitzer to oppose a license extension for a nuclear plant that has run without incident since 1974. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, of New York, also sounded alarms about safety at the plant, Indian Point.

Democrats never waste an opportunity to exploit the legacy of fear about nuclear energy, while the rest of the world moves ahead.

While Democrats spurn energy options, the People's Republic of China is sprinting to build new nuclear plants to supply energy for factories it has taken from America. The PRC, using French and Canadian technology, has six nuclear plants under construction, and a dozen more nearing the building stage.

France reacted differently to the Middle East oil shocks of the 1970s than we did. Because France developed technology for safe plant operation and waste disposal, its 59 nuclear facilities now provide 75 percent of the nation's energy.

France is the world's largest exporter of electricity, and makes more than \$4 billion a year from sales. France also enjoys the industrial world's lowest rates of greenhouse gas emissions.

Cheap, safe, profitable and environmentally sound energy.

Contrast that with Spitzer's plan to bar nuclear power plants from streamlined construction permitting. There's been no change in state policy since Spitzer's fall, and none here.

Tossing a bone to her San Francisco district, Pelosi virtually forbade the House to include nuclear power in the energy bill.

Many well-meaning people flocked to the anti-nuclear movement after Nine Mile Island and Chernobyl. But blind opposition to all nuclear power has since morphed from a cottage industry into a leftist power bloc, whose influence must be broken.

dturner@buffnews.com



Is local nuclear site properly sealed?

Updated: Sep 23, 2008 06:26 PM EDT



Crews are taking extra precautions to ensure a nuclear disposal site at West Valley is properly sealed.



John Chamberlain from West Valley Environmental Services said, "There is very low level and very high level waste in the same area."



They're covering the disposal site with a thick black plastic, and they're covering an area that would measure about five football fields.



The idea is that the rainwater will run off the plastic and into trenches

WEST VALLEY, N.Y. (WIVB) - Crews are taking extra precautions to ensure a nuclear disposal site at West Valley is properly sealed.

The U.S. Department of Energy is nearing the end of a six-month project to cover an old disposal site where highly contaminated tanks, a flatbed truck, and even an entire railcar were buried next to the West Valley Demonstration Project in the 1960's and 70's.

John Chamberlain from West Valley Environmental Services said, "There is very low level and very high level waste in the same area."

They're covering the disposal site with a thick black plastic, and they're covering an area that would measure about five football fields.

Fifteen years ago, the state covered another disposal site right next to it. That area's the size of about 10 football fields.

The idea is that the rainwater will run off the plastic and into trenches nearby, instead of what has been happening.

Rain permeates the clay and mixes with the toxic waste, and the run off has to be captured and filtered.

"We sample that weekly before we send it to our filtering system here," said Chief Engineer, at WVES Dan Mess.

Judy Einach, Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Wastes said, "It's absolutely essential that they do this work. What we're afraid of, is that once this cap is in place, that the Department of Energy will say okay, we have this ground stabilized, therefore we're going to leave the wastes in place longer term."

This will only last from 10 to 30 years, until a final plan is in place.

"And a decision will come hopefully in the next several decades for a long term approach to managing them," said Chamberlain.

In December, the Department of Energy will release a long term plan for the site, and then take public input on it.

Learn more by going to the attached link next to this story. Once there, scroll down and click on NRC License Disposal Area.

Story by George Richert, WIVB

nearby



Judy Einach, Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Wastes said, "It's absolutely essential that they do this work."



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