

EPA proposes more trees, plants, and improved monitoring at site

By KELLY HILL Repository staff writer

LAKE TWP. — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is pushing a final cleanup plan that calls for the closed Industrial Excess Landfill to heal itself.

The EPA has issued a summary of its proposed change to the cleanup at the Superfund site south of Uniontown. The amendment calls for more vegetation at the site. It also calls for long- and short-term testing to ensure that someone addresses any unexpected problems caused by the hundreds of thousands of tons of unidentified toxic waste that remain buried in the 30-acre dump.

But many of the details are not yet clear.

The cost of the \$7 million cleanup plan — reduced from a high of \$26 million in 1997 — would be borne by the companies responsible for the cleanup: Goodyear, Goodrich Corp., Bridgestone-Firestone and GenCorp.

The 10-page fact sheet released Wednesday, which residents should receive within the next week, is distilled from a 40-page Focused Feasibility Study by the U.S. EPA.

The complete study compares in detail the phytoremediation method — letting trees and other plants cover the landfill — with the old plan for a synthetic cap. The cap was to keep rainwater from percolating into the landfill contamination and then into the ground water.

The fact sheet also explains U.S. EPA's reasoning for proposing the change. It still is being reviewed by U.S. EPA officials in Chicago.

The full document is expected to be available next week, when Ross del Rosario, remedial project manager for the site for U.S. EPA Region 5, comes to oversee the next round of ground-water tests at the landfill.

The fact sheet outlines several components to the new plan.

- Planting more trees and other plants on the site.

Del Rosario said the “vegetative cover” has three purposes. The plants are supposed to reduce the amount of water that leaches through the site and break down the waste with help from roots, oxygen and microbes. The additional vegetation also is to “provide cover and habitat for wildlife, increasing the biodiversity of the site,” del Rosario said. “This falls very neatly with the future land use of the site” as a possible wildlife preserve with a walking trail — if it is ultimately deemed safe for people to set foot on it.