

Lake Township citizens want more testing at IEL after latest results

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BY [Kelli Young](#) REPOSITORY STAFF WRITER

LAKE TWP. - Sick of the federal government's assessment on the Industrial Excess Landfill, a citizens group said it wanted to give community members a second opinion.

The group's diagnosis — explained by two scientists Tuesday night — wasn't good.

Mark Baskaran, associate professor of geology at Wayne State University, said he found evidence of varying levels of radioactive materials at the Uniontown landfill. He said low levels of plutonium were found in the groundwater that could imply that a larger amount of the radioactive material is buried nearby.

Julie Weatherington Rice, senior scientist at Bennett & Williams Environmental Consultants in Columbus, pointed to data that suggests monitoring wells varied in acidity in an unnatural way, suggesting contaminants. She also said the landfill's location makes it more vulnerable to allow possible contaminants to spread downstream.

But both scientists said more testing needs to be done. And the analysis shouldn't be conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency, which is now examining the site as part of its review to study the cleanup's effectiveness, nor the companies suspected of dumping material at the site.

Baskaran believes that samples collected in previous tests for radioactive material weren't collected or stored properly, resulting in lowered readings for plutonium. Rice, who also serves as an adjunct assistant professor at Ohio State University, said current tests are flawed because many of the monitoring wells around the landfill have been closed.

"By taking the wells away, it took away our ability to understand why and what was coming out of the landfill, not stopping them from coming out," she said.

Baskaran believes the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense would be the most appropriate agencies.

Baskaran, Rice and two other scientists, Mike Ketterer, professor of chemistry and biochemistry at Northern Arizona University, and Linda Aller, principal geologist for Bennett & Williams, were hired by Concerned Citizens of Lake Township through a grant.

They used existing data and conducted their own samplings for the studies where they tried to answer the same questions of potential radioactive contamination that have been raised since at least the 1990s.

The Superfund site, which opened in 1966, never was licensed to receive radioactive waste, but neighbors have indicated seeing trucks dumping radioactive materials into the landfill.

The U.S. EPA, which had a representative at the meeting who did not speak, has dismissed any findings that suggest radioactive material was dumped at the site.

The agency is turning the former landfill into an animal preserve. Trees and shrubbery have been planted at the site, which is fenced off from public access.

But Greg Coleridge, another activist who has criticized the EPA's management of the landfill, said Tuesday's presentations should serve as a catalyst for the federal agencies to perform what he called a "true cleanup."

He said the information represents a shift in the burden of proof from the residents who he said had to prove something was dangerous at the landfill to "those who claim IEL is safe."

"It is on them to show that what is below IEL is safe," he said.

Coleridge was among about 50 other people, many of whom are active in environmental issues in neighboring communities.

Jill Dietle, who recently began battling the EPA for records about a sewage problem near her Perry Township home, extended her support to the Concerned Citizens of Lake Township.

"Tonight, I realized all of us in Stark County have the same problem," she said.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Four scientists on Tuesday provided highlights from their respective reports that studied potential radiation at the Industrial Excess Landfill in Uniontown.

To review their reports, visit the Concerned Citizens of Lake Township Web site at: www.northcanton.com/iel/index.htm