

Community divided on IEL remedy

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LAKE TWP. — Frustration, hope, resignation, confidence. Public input on the proposed cleanup of Uniontown's Industrial Excess Landfill has it all.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency held a public hearing and 30-day comment period in late April and early May. The agency is proposing what it calls remedies for the site: from a clay cap to a "vegetative cap" formed by planting trees and other foliage.

An arrangement for further testing would have to be worked out by the township, the companies and the U.S. and Ohio EPA.

People interested in the cleanup sent their thoughts on the matter to the U.S. EPA.

The written comments were nearly split among those who clearly supported the vegetative or phyto-cap, and those who do not.

Other people did not specify what remedy they wanted.

But they made it clear they're worried about their water, frustrated with the process and don't have much confidence in the state or federal EPA.

The comments also included a petition signed by more than 170 Uniontown residents, including people who live on Moonglo Street NW, Peach Glen Avenue NW, Lakeland Street NW, Oaklynn Street NW, Broad Vista Street NW and North Vista NW, among others.

The signatures, indicating that those residents oppose the tree-planting plan, were gathered by a woman interning with American Friends Service Committee — which also opposes the phyto-cap.

Other opponents include the grass-roots group Concerned Citizens of Lake Township, the national watchdog Project on Government Oversight and other area environmental activists.

Township officials, Ohio EPA, members of the Lake Township Community Advisory Group and the companies responsible for the cleanup — Goodyear, Goodrich Corp., Bridgestone-Firestone and GenCorp — support the plan to plant trees and continue testing.

Some excerpts from the written comments of Uniontown residents:

- "I feel that phytoremediation is a viable resolution to the landfill problem as long as monitoring continues. I really don't trust the EPA in terms of their leadership and believe the township has a responsibility to keep watch over all IEL activities." — Jane Martin.
- "I believe that the area should be maintained in a safe and monitored fashion, that is USEFUL to the Uniontown Community. ... I think that the paranoia of the area could be overcome just by the usefulness that could be offered." — Ken Millard.
- "I cannot believe the EPA would seriously consider just planting vegetation to clean up the Uniontown Dump. ... Why do people have to keep fighting in order to get what is right, after all the Super fund (sic) is tax money we have all paid. I think the EPA is a big joke." — Dorothy Repogle.
- "Talk is cheap. That's all I've heard for the 15 years I've lived out in Uniontown. Put a clay cap on IEL. Do it now." — Thomas Cowman.

U.S. EPA officials must compile the comments and respond to them before the site remedy can be changed. The last time the proposed remedy was changed, it took about a year for the U.S. EPA to formulate its response.