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Lead testing to continue in Lowertown

CLEANUP: Agency found elevated lead samples at 28 homes, says no 'acute risk' to residents.

BY TIM FENSTER

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will spend the summer continuing testing at 28 Lowertown homes where lead contamination was found previously in sub-surface soils.

After a project update

before the Common Council Wednesday, project manager Julio Vazquez said the agency is now hoping to complete its work design plan by Sept. 30, a schedule that is likely to push remedial work into 2020.

Last August, EPA officials said they had hoped to complete the work design plan by this spring, and begin work

removing lead-contaminated soil by this summer. The \$7 million cleanup plan will involve removing 14,000 cubic yards of lead-contaminated soil from affected residences on Mill, Chapel, Porter, North Adam and Frost streets.

The soil will be trucked to an off-site facility licensed to handle the waste, and the excavated areas will then be restored with clean soil.

"We definitely intend to get this job done as soon as we can," said EPA spokesman

Michael Basile.

Basile said they were hopeful they could finish the work design plan by this spring, but encountered various delays. Harsh winter weather temporarily delayed testing, as did the 35-day, partial shutdown of the federal government in December and January.

While EPA officials are similarly optimistic they can stick with the current estimated schedule, they acknowledge other delays could push the soil removal back further.

The agency could discover more widespread contamination in the affected areas, necessitating a more complex work design plan. Or the agency could have challenges securing funding for the work.

The Superfund program typically requires polluters to fund the cleanups. However, Basile said Eighteen Mile Creek has a history of industrial use that dates back to the 1800s and includes dozens of industrial facilities,

deeply complicating efforts to identify responsible parties.

Instead, EPA officials on the Eighteen Mile Creek cleanup will have to compete against other projects for limited funding.

But they say residents in the affected home should not be concerned about the delay in the cleanup.

Remedial Project Manager Jaclyn Kondrk said the lead contamination was primarily found in sub-surface soils,

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and thus, does not post an immediate risk to those residents. When the EPA identifies immediate risks, she said, it launches an emergency cleanup.

"This isn't an immediate exposure issue. It's a long-term exposure issue," said Kondrk, who is managing the creek cleanup aside from the phase addressing the lead-contaminated homes.

During the August community meeting, EPA officials suggested residents in the affected homes take steps to

limit their risk of lead exposure. These include refraining from gardening, more frequently bathing outdoor pets (particularly their paw pads) and cleaning their floors of dirt more regularly.

Kondrk said Wednesday the agency made these recommendations "out of an abundance of caution."

Kondrk also told the council the testing over the summer will go to depths of 4 feet, deeper than previous testing, to ensure lead contamination is not present in those deeper soils. Even so, past testing found most of the contaminants were less than 18 inches deep. The agency said

it did not find contaminants other than lead in those areas. Meanwhile, the EPA is continuing testing in the creek itself for the second and third phases of the cleanup, which are likely to go on for years.

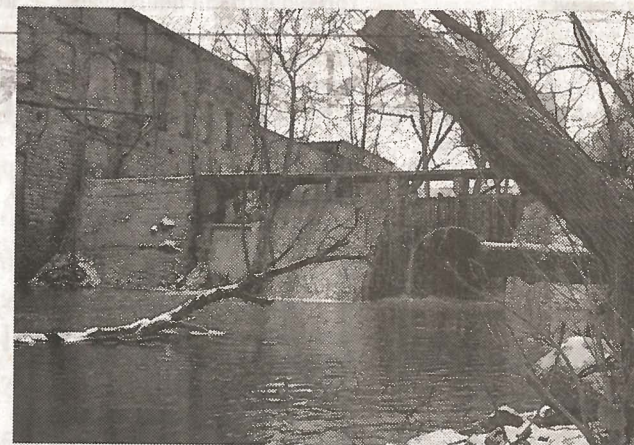
The agency finalized its plans for the second phase cleanup in January 2017. That \$23 million project calls for dredging contaminated sediments at the former United Paperboard Company property, 62 to 70 Mill St.; the White Transportation property, 30 to 40 Mill St.; Upson Park; former residential parcels on Water Street; and near the dilapidated Clinton and

William Street dams, which will be removed. The former Flintkote Plant property, 198 and 300 Mill St., will undergo dredging and capping.

The first phase, which was completed in May 2016, included the removal of the former Flintkote building and the relocation of five families on Water Street because creek waters regularly flooded and recontaminated the properties.

The third phase of the cleanup will cover a 14-mile stretch from Harwood Street to Lake Ontario.

Kondrk said that work is proceeding "pretty much on schedule."



This file photo shows Eighteen Mile Creek as it flows behind 62 Mill St. at the former Lockport Paperboard property. This section was on the EPA's list for dredging to remove PCBs, lead and other contaminants.

http://www.lockportjournal.com/news/local_news/epa-removing-trees-in-upson-park/article_79247dce-b567-11e8-b5d2-fb1747cac51d.html

EDITOR'S PICK

FEATURED

EPA removing trees in Upson Park

By Tim Fenster tim.fenster@lockportjournal.com Sep 11, 2018



Tim Fenster / Staff

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is having trees removed from non-public wooded areas of Upson Park, to continue soil sampling and testing in pursuit of a work plan for the second phase of cleanup of the Eighteen Mile Creek Corridor.



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is removing trees from Upson Park to continue soil sampling as part of its cleanup of a nearly mile-long section of Eighteen Mile Creek.

The trees were removed from a steep embankment to give agency staff access to areas where it is testing the soil for elevated levels of lead or PCBs. The tree removal is scheduled to conclude Sept. 14, and will not result in any park closures.

The agency is currently designing a work plan for the second phase of its Eighteen Mile Creek Corridor cleanup, which covers an area between Harwood Street and the Erie Canal. Phase-two work will include removal of contaminated soil in Upson Park, as well as former industrial sites, including United Paperboard Company, White Transportation and the Flintkote property.

In a statement responding to questions from the Union-Sun & Journal on Monday, the EPA said public areas of Upson Park did not show elevated levels of lead or PCBs. Rather, the contamination is concentrated in soil along steep and wooded areas of the park.

"Concentrations of PCBs and lead were below cleanup levels or not detected in the publicly accessible areas of the park," EPA spokesman David Kluesner said in the statement. "EPA has concluded that the lead and PCB contamination at Upson Park is located in the subsurface soil in heavily forested and extremely steep areas that are not easily accessible, and therefore do not present a risk to visitors. However, the contamination could pose a risk in the future if there is a change in land use, which is the basis for EPA's planned action to excavate the contaminated soils at Upson Park."

Eighteen Mile Creek Corridor was added to the Superfund National Priorities List in March 2012. Investigations found the presence of PCBs, lead and other contaminants in the sediment in and around the creek in the city.

PCBs are believed to cause cancer and can damage the immune, reproductive, nervous and endocrine systems in humans and animals. Lead can damage the nervous system and cause other health complications.

In July, EPA announced it plans to remove roughly 14,000 cubic yards of lead-contaminated soil from at least 26 residential properties near the creek. The agency plans to reach a Record Of Decision in the coming months, finish its work design plan by next spring and begin construction next summer, agency officials told residents at a public meeting last month.

EPA officials said they fast-tracked that portion of the cleanup after finding lead contamination in the soil beneath more than two dozen homes.

"We don't wait for our investigation to be done to address any immediate health risks that may be present," said Pete Mannino, EPA Western New York remediation section chief.

After EPA completes its phase-two cleanup, it plans to move on to the largest section of the creek corridor, which stretches 14 miles from Harwood Street north to the creek outlet at Lake Ontario in Olcott.

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EPA Lowertown cleanup pushed back further

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LOCKPORT: Agency now plans to complete work plan in first half of 2021.

BY TIM FENSTER
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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's plans to remove lead-contaminated soil at 28 Lowertown homes near Eighteen Mile Creek has been pushed back once again, as EPA officials now anticipate the work beginning in late 2020 at the earliest.

In August 2018, EPA officials outlined an aggressive timeline for the \$7 million project to remove about 14,000 cubic yards of soil with elevated lead levels from homes on Mill, Chapel, Porter, North Adam and Frost streets. The hopeful

timeline called for completing the work design plan by this past spring and remediating the contaminated soil by this past summer.

After a meeting with the Common Council in May, EPA officials said they hoped to finish the work design by Sept. 30 and complete remedial work in 2020.

EPA spokesman Mike Basile said by email Friday the agency is awaiting results from its last round of soil sampling in October, after which it will evaluate the data. Basile said the work design will now be completed in the first half of 2020, with remedial work to follow.

"Our timeline is focused on ensuring that we have done a thorough analysis before beginning the cleanup process," Basile said in a statement.

The EPA discovered elevated lead levels at the homes during its larger cleanup of Eighteen Mile Creek, which has a history of industrial uses dating back to the 1800s.

Remedial Project Manager Jaclyn Kondrk said in May the agency discovered no contaminants other than lead in those residential properties.

The EPA previously recommended residents in affected homes take steps to mitigate their lead exposure, including refraining from gardening, more frequently bathing outdoor pets (particularly their paw pads) and cleaning dirt from their floors more regularly.

"This isn't an immediate exposure issue. It's a long-term exposure issue," Kondrk said at the time.