

Wheatfield landfill status downgraded by state DEC

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Despite remediation work completed earlier this year, the status of a Wheatfield landfill has been downgraded by the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

Wheatfield Supervisor Robert Cliffe announced at a recent town board meeting that he had received a notice from the DEC informing him of the change. The downgrade from Class 3, which presents no significant risk to the public or the environment, to Class 2, which the DEC defines as presenting "a significant threat to public health and/or the environment" comes after 80 truckloads of waste were removed from the site.

"Reclassifying the site as a hazardous site all of a sudden was nerve-wracking," Cliffe said. "There were two names on the notice, one was (Department of Health Project Manager) Matthew Forcucci. I called and talked to him, he said it's not uncommon. A Class 2 site gives more tools to the DEC to force remediation."

The waste removed from the Niagara Sanitation Company landfill, which is located off of Nash Road, came out of Love Canal. According to the notice, some of the potentially dangerous components of the waste include metals, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, polychlorinated biphenyls, pesticides, caustics and plating tank sludge.

Since the landfill was open from 1964 to 1968, companies which put waste in the landfill will ultimately be responsible for teaming up to provide the economic resources needed to continue remediation. The notice mentioned the Niagara Falls Air Force Base, Bell Aerospace, Carborundum, Frontier Chemical, Graphite Specialties, Continental Can and Grief Brothers among some of the companies known to have utilized the landfill.

Cliffe said that the DEC will retain control over the site and at some point in the future, likely in the coming year, work will begin on the next steps. Using State Superfund Project, they will be able to



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CONTRIBUTED This map shows the exact location of the landfill, which can be found off of Nash Road near Niagara Falls Boulevard. The public is urged to stay away from the site.

identify financial partners and try to determine where and how much remaining waste is considered hazardous. Then those partners will contribute funds toward addressing the problem.

"I'm told that this process will start reasonably soon but make take several years before significant actions occur," Cliffe said. "At this time Wheatfield is waiting to hear from the DEC as they move toward the next step."

In the meantime, the public is urged to avoid the site, which the DEC said in their notice has been documented as a common site for joggers and dirt bike riders. Cliffe said, since the property is owned by the town, anyone on the land is technically trespassing. For that reason as well as the preservation of public health, the supervisor said he "strongly recommends" that people refrain from using the land for recreational purposes.

Another fear, specifically relating to the use of dirt bikes or ATVs on the property, is that the machines will rip out the cap which keeps the waste sealed under the surface of the ground.

"Dirt bike trails are evident throughout the site and use of such has resulted in landfill materials to become exposed at the surface," the DEC notice said. "Therefore, the site represents a significant threat to the environment and public health."