

EPA taking action on Eighteen Mile Creek home

CITY: *At least one property on Mill Street to be remediated.*

BY PHILIP GAMBINI

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Years after she began to raise concern about contamination on her property and others in the Eighteen Mile Creek corridor, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has decided to take remedial action at Shirley Nicholas' Mill Street home.

Agency staff have

determined elevated lead levels at Nicholas's property, 201 Mill St., matched the "fingerprint" of lead contaminants found in proximity to Eighteen Mile Creek after soil in the area was tested in July, EPA spokesman Michael Basile said earlier this month.

Another eight properties have had their soil tested and are being considered for remediation due to what Basile described as "slightly elevated lead levels."

"There's probably a few more that are definitely going to need remediation as well," Basile said in a

telephone call, adding the majority of the properties were on Mill Street.

Action, if taken, would require certain soil sections of residential yards to be transported offsite and replaced with clean material. The efforts will "definitely" take place at Nicholas's home, Basile said, while the other properties remain in consideration.

Basile said the EPA findings did not "warrant us going out on an emergency response," which is how the agency addressed the 2014 buyout of five family homes on Water Street, an area that

routinely flooded when the creek broke its banks.

Basile said he had "no comment" when asked by what means the lead would have made its way to residential homes along Eighteen Mile Creek.

Nicholas said she was informed of the decision over lunch with EPA staff earlier this year. The conversation followed multiple rounds of soil testing at her home over multiple years.

In initial tests, conducted between 2013 and 2014 at Nicholas's property, the EPA collected 31 samples, over

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FILE PHOTO

After raising concerns about contamination in the Eighteen Mile Creek corridor, the EPA has decided to take remedial action at Shirley Nicholas' Mill Street home.

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half of which exceeded safe limits for lead, 400 parts per million.

Another four samples from her yard exceeded the limits by more than double. The highest reading, registered 6 inches below the surface, was more than four times the level the agency deems safe.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health links short-term lead exposure with memory loss and weakness, while long-term exposure can build up in the hard and soft tissue of the body and potentially

lead to anemia and kidney and brain damage, or other ailments.

The EPA collected another 19 soil samples from Nicholas's property in July. About half tested above safe levels and three were over double the federal limit.

In the meantime, Nicholas has helped organize concerned residents with Citizens Against Pollution of Niagara (CAPON), a grassroots civic group in place to raise awareness about Eighteen Mile Creek and other contaminated zones in the city.

Nicholas believes the contamination is more serious than has been disclosed, she said earlier this month.

"Safety in numbers," Nicholas said.

Her involvement in the group has lead some to accuse of her of having an "agenda," she said.

"Damn well know I have an agenda, that's the to save people's lives and pain and suffering, and that's it," Nicholas said.

Basile said the EPA has tested a total of 28 homes in the area, including Nicholas's, between July and December. Only the first round testing results have been certified. The agency has determined nine properties contain lead found in Eighteen Mile Creek, he said.

Mayor Anne McCaffrey said the remediation

decision and continued sampling was a testament to the agency's diligence in cleaning up the city's the toxic industrial sites.

"I'm glad that the EPA has been on top of this issue," she said earlier this month.

"I don't believe there's any reason for anyone to be alarmed or concerned, we know all of our older cities in Western New York have been dealing with varying levels of contamination," she said later in the conversation.

Mark Devine, a 3rd Ward alderman on the Common Council and member of CAPON, also praised the EPA's work but said he does consider the matter a

"serious concern."

"I think if you're Shirley Nicholas, and people who live next to her ... I think they should have reason for concern," he said.

Beyond Eighteen Mile Creek, Devine said there are about 22 separate areas of contamination in the city he would like to see investigated.

McCaffrey said a government-organized committee is being formed to help address the issues. It will be lead by 1st Ward Alderman Joseph Oates, whose constituents are the main target of EPA soil sampling, to this point.

"He has asked we create an environmental committee,"

she said, but other individuals have yet to be appointed.

McCaffrey said she intends to gather a "variety of different people with different backgrounds" to staff the committee.

Next year, contractors will extend testing to the northern sections of Lockport, toward the hamlet of Olcott and the town of Wilson, Basile said.

It is "standard operating procedure" for the agency's remedial investigation to determine the reach of the contamination and "where it stops," at least as it relates to Eighteen Mile Creek.

"We think we're close to that point in the city of Lockport," he said.

EPA years away from clean up of creek

PHASE II: *Plan could take one to two years, work would start once "funding is available."*

BY TIM FENSTER

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency still has no anticipated completion date for the design of the work plan for the second

phase of the remediation of Eighteen Mile Creek.

The EPA has been conducting testing and engineering since January 2017 on the second phase of the cleanup, which will address a nearly one-mile stretch of the creek south of Harwood Street.

In response to questions emailed this past week, an EPA spokesperson wrote Wednesday that the design would take one to two years, and work could commence once the design

is complete and funding is available.

The Common Council recently voted to let the EPA take soil samples at 501 West Jackson St., and soil, groundwater and sediment samples in the rights-of-way along Clinton, Jackson and Monroe streets.

The EPA will also be installing groundwater monitoring wells in Upson Park.

"The additional soil sampling is being conducted to refine the areas of soil that are to be excavated and

removed (during the second phase cleanup)," said Michael Basile, EPA community involvement coordinator.

According to an EPA community update from last June, soil and sediment in that portion of the creek has tested positive for lead and PCBs.

The update states the cleanup will include a "bank-to-bank excavation" of creek sediments, and a combination of excavation and capping of soil near the creek.

The Eighteen Mile Creek Corridor site was added to

the National Priorities List (U.S. Superfund list of hazardous waste sites) in March 2012. Investigations found the presence of PCBs, lead and other contaminants in the sediment in and around the creek.

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.

Some local anti-pollution

activists criticized EPA for not disclosing the results of past testing or the date that the second phase of creek corridor cleanup will begin.

Anita Mullane, chairman of Citizens Against Pollution, said the EPA previously told the group that test results would be kept confidential to protect the privacy of the property owners.

"Don't you think the people of the city deserve to know which homes have cancer-causing chemicals on their properties?" Mullane said.

City authorizes more EPA testing

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of its cleanup investigation.

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Jean Kiene said Upson Park should have signage warning visitors of the contaminants, saying this was a major concern of the late Shirley Nicholas, who won the EPA's Environmental Champion award last June for advocating a cleanup of Eighteen Mile Creek.

"Certainly there are areas there that are severely contaminated. She felt it was important that signage be there," Kiene said.

ENVIRONMENT: *No word from federal agency on start date of phase II remediation work.*

BY TIM FENSTER

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The City of Lockport is allowing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to conduct more water and soil testing near Eighteen Mile Creek, as part of the federal agency's cleanup of the creek.

Mayor Anne E. McCaffrey said EPA requested permission to take soil samples at 501 West Jackson

St., and soil, groundwater and sediment samples in the rights-of-way along Clinton, Jackson and Monroe streets. The council voted unanimously Wednesday to authorize the testing.

"I'm in full support of them doing more testing," McCaffrey said.

Since January 2017, EPA has been designing a work plan to remediate a 1-mile stretch of the creek south of Harwood Street. The \$23 million project is the second of three phases in the cleanup of the creek between the city and Olcott/Newfane, and would utilize capping and dredging to remove pollutants.

The second phase will include dredging contaminated sediments

in and along the creek at: the former United Paperboard Company property, 62 to 70 Mill St.; the White Transportation property, 30 to 40 Mill St.; Upson Park off Clinton Street; former residential parcels on Water Street; and near the dilapidated Clinton and William Street dams, which will be removed. Treatment at the old Flintkote property, 198 - 300 Mill St., will involve dredging and capping.

Michael Basile, EPA community involvement coordinator, said in January 2017 that it would take at least 18 months to design the work plan.

As of press time Thursday, EPA had not responded to requests for

comment on the purpose of the additional testing or when the work plan will be complete.

Since shortly after Scott Pruitt was confirmed as EPA administrator in February 2017, agency officials have been required to receive prior approval before commenting publicly. Comments must be vetted by both the regional EPA office in New York City and the national headquarters in Washington D.C., and the process can take up to two days.

McCaffrey said EPA sent a letter to the city stating the testing will help the agency "determine the extent of the contamination" as part

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will conduct soil, sediment and ground water testing near Upson Park as part of its second-phase cleanup of the Eighteen Mile Creek Corridor, a U.S. Superfund-listed hazardous waste site.

US&J FILE PHOTO

April 22, 2018

EPA years away from clean up of creek

PHASE II: *Plan could take one to two years, work would start once "funding is available."*

BY TIM FENSTER
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More creek studies ordered

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ENVIRONMENT: *Soil, water tests at Plank Road tied to 3rd phase of 18-Mile Creek cleanup.*

BY TIM FENSTER
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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will soon begin testing soil and water from Eighteen Mile Creek near Plank Road as part of the agency's ongoing cleanup of the creek.

For the past 16 months, EPA has been designing its work plan of the second phase of the Eighteen Mile Creek Corridor cleanup, which will address a roughly one-mile section of the creek south of Harwood Street to the Erie Canal. But the testing near Plank Road is part of EPA's investigation for the third and final phase of the cleanup, which will address a roughly 14-mile stretch from Harwood Street to the creek's end at Olcott Harbor.

The agency will be testing surface soil and water for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), metals (including lead) and semi-volatile organic compounds.

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.

Asked about specific locations, an EPA spokesperson said surface water will be taken near Plank Road, three flow monitors will be installed at "unspecified locations" near the road and that soil as deep as 1 foot will be collected from a creek floodplain east of Plank Road.

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The creek lies to the east of Plank Road in an area near the city wastewater treatment plant, then the road crosses the creek farther north near the intersection with Mill Street.

The Common Council authorized the testing by a unanimous vote May 16.

The second phase of creek corridor remediation is expected to include 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 property, 198 and 300 Mill St., will undergo dredging and capping.

Late last month, EPA said it has no anticipated completion date for the design of the phase two work plan. The cleanup is expected to cost \$23 million, which will initially be funded with federal dollars.

The Superfund program operates on the principle that polluters should fund the cleanups, not taxpayers. However, EPA spokesman



USE&J FILE PHOTO

Eighteen Mile Creek between Lockport and Olcott is the subject of a long-term cleanup effort through the U.S. Superfund. In the so-called Eighteen Mile Creek Corridor, the creek bed and banks are believed to be contaminated with toxins including PCBs and heavy metals.

Michael Basile said the creek's history of industrial use dates back to the 1800s and dozens of industrial facilities have called the banks of the creek home. Basile said this complicates efforts to determine which companies are responsible for the pollution. Most Superfund sites, he said, are in more concentrated

areas with just one or two industries.

The agency is still reviewing the information on the companies that are potentially responsible.

"We can't point fingers until we have all the information," Basile said previously.

In May 2016, EPA finished the first phase of the

cleanup, which included the removal of a building on the Flintkote site and the buyout and relocation of five families on nearby Water Street. Basile explained that those residents had to be relocated because each time the creek flooded, new contamination washed onto their yards.

EPA to clean soil at 26 local residences

CLEANUP: Roughly 14,000 cubic yards of lead-contaminated soil to be removed near Eighteen Mile Creek.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has proposed cleanup of lead-contaminated soil at roughly 26 residences that are located near the former Flintkote

Plant property at the Eighteen Mile Creek Superfund Site.

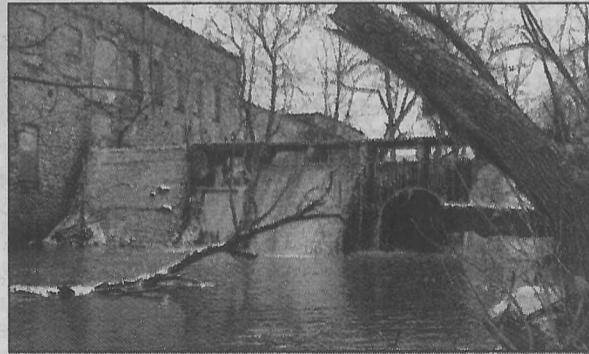
As part of a multi-phased, comprehensive cleanup of the Eighteen Mile Creek Site, the EPA is proposing the removal of roughly 14,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil and off-site disposal at facilities licensed to handle the waste. The excavated areas will be restored and backfilled with clean soil.

“EPA is committed to taking

action to address the significant health threat lead contamination poses across the country,” said EPA Regional Administrator Pete Lopez. “The plan proposed for this site will address the lead in the soil that children and families could be exposed to on these properties.”

The agency said it has provided property owners with their specific soil sampling results and has discussed preventative measures to

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This photo shows Eighteen Mile Creek as it flows behind 62 Mill St. at the former Lockport Paperboard property.

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reduce exposure before an action can be taken. Once the EPA gets public input on its proposal and finalizes a plan for these properties, the agency officials said they will coordinate with the property owners to minimize impacts and inconveniences associated with construction.

Once the final plan is selected, EPA will take more soil samples to determine more conclusively the number of residential properties that need soil cleanup. EPA will monitor air near the work areas to ensure protection of residents and the surrounding community.

Eighteen Mile Creek has

a long history of industrial use dating back to the 1800s. The headwaters of the creek consist of an east and west branch beginning immediately north of the New York State Barge Canal in Lockport. Eighteen Mile Creek flows north approximately 15 miles and discharges into Lake Ontario in Olcott. Investigations at the site show that sediment and soil in and around Eighteen Mile Creek and nearby properties are contaminated with a variety of pollutants, including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and lead.

The former Flintkote Plant property located at 198 and 300 Mill St. operated between 1928 and 1971 and manufactured felt products.

Concerns voiced at EPA meeting



JAMES NEISS/staff photographer

Jean Kiene joined other anti-pollution activists outside an EPA public meeting at the Niagara Cornell Cooperative Extension calling for a cancer study of the Eighteen Mile Creek corridor. The group held signs featuring the late Shirley Nichols, founder of Citizens Against Pollution of Niagara.

Lowertown residents address clean-up plan with relief, frustration, impatience

BY TIM FENSTER

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For decades, residents in parts of Lockport's Lowertown neighborhood lived atop soil contaminated with high concentrations of lead.

On Thursday night at the Cornell Cooperative Extension, dozens of those residents heard U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials detail their plan to remove lead from dozens of properties along Frost, Porter, Chapel, N. Adams and Mill streets.

The planned cleanup — the most thorough and expensive option identified by the EPA — involves excavation of all soil with lead contamination

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JAMES NEISS/staff photographer

Citizens Against Pollution of Niagara frequently invoked the motto of the group's founder, environmental activist Shirley Nicholas: "Your health is your wealth."

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above “clean up levels,” and will allow current and future residents to use their properties without any restrictions.

The EPA’s recommended, \$6.7 million plan is the result of months of soil testing, beginning in early 2017, in the area of the Eighteen Mile Creek Superfund Site.

The site 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, left by various industries dating back to the Nineteenth Century.

While many residents at the meeting expressed frustration with the pace of the cleanup, EPA officials insisted that the planned action shows the agency hits the gas when it identifies immediate threats to human health.

“These properties were tested in three different phases in 2017. Here we are in 2018 with a proposed plan. That’s lightning speed. That really is,” said EPA spokesman Mike Basile.

In the coming months, the EPA will continue testing the Lowertown neighborhood identified for soil removal and continue developing its record of decision. They hope to develop a work design plan by next spring, and put shovels in the ground by the following summer.

The EPA initially stated 26 residences would be included in the cleanup. But



JAMES NEISS/staff photographer

Anti-pollution activists outside an EPA public meeting at the Niagara Cornell Cooperative Extension were calling for a cancer study of the Eighteen Mile Creek corridor.

on Thursday, EPA officials said more might be added based on the results of the additional testing.

Residents will remain in their homes throughout the cleanup, though they may be temporarily relocated if they find the construction too bothersome. EPA officials stressed that any temporary relocations would not be related to environmental pollutants.

Meanwhile, the EPA is continuing testing along a

one-mile stretch south of Harwood Street as it develops its design plan to remediate contaminants in the area.

That remediation is expected to include dredging and capping of contaminated sediments at Upson Park, the former Flintkote Plant property and other former industrial sites.

Remedial Project Manager Jaclyn Kondrk said the agency may not complete the design plan for another

year or two. The EPA began work on the design plan in January 2017, and Basile initially estimated it would take one to two years.

Meanwhile, the EPA is also testing along the 14-mile stretch from Harwood Street to Lake Ontario — the third and largest phase of the cleanup.

EPA officials couldn’t offer an estimated timeline for those remediations.

“It’s hard to quantify how long these things take,” Kondrk said. “There’s a lot of moving parts between (the next three phases of the cleanup).”

Dozens of area residents and local environmental activists addressed EPA officials on the clean-up plan, posing questions on the timeline, the extent of the risk to human health and frustration that the issue wasn’t addressed sooner or more transparently.

Some shared stories of loved ones and pets that died of cancer, saying they believe it’s related to the pollution.

“My mother has had kidney cancer. Luckily, we caught it. She’s now going to Roswell (Park Cancer Institute) again for her lungs. I’ve had miscarriages. The dogs have died of cancer,” said Angela Butera, a Lowertown resident and member of Citizens Against Pollution of Niagara.

Immediately prior to the meeting, over a dozen members of CAPON rallied to call for more studies on potential human health impacts of pollution near the creek. They frequently invoked the motto of the group’s founder, environmental activist

Shirley Nicholas, who died last year: “Your health is your wealth.”

But many commended the EPA for recommending the most thorough of its three proposed cleanup options.

“I’m pleased the EPA’s preferred cleanup is no. 3, the most expensive but also the most comprehensive,” said Carla Speranza, of Lincoln Avenue in the Town of Lockport. “Thank you for that. Frankly, if your choice was anything else, you’d probably have a riot on your hands.”

Speranza also asked if cuts in EPA funding would impact remediation of Superfund sites.

Under the Trump administration, EPA spending dropped from \$8.725 billion in 2016 to an estimated \$7.916 billion this year, according to historical data from the Office of Budget and Management. The administration has also proposed larger cuts in EPA funding.

“I feel very confident (the funding will be available) because the agency is very focused on Superfund,” Kondrk said. “The agency gives priority to residential cleanups. This is protecting human health and the environment — this is what we’re here for.”

Several residents asked whether the lead could contaminate their water supply, or whether they should avoid their yards or the creek until the excavation and remediation is complete.

EPA officials explained that the risk is from consumption of lead-contaminated soil. They recommended a number of

prevention measures for residents living near the contaminated area:

Wash your hands thoroughly after coming in contact with the soil. Take off your shoes before going inside to reduce dirt brought into the house. Bathe pets frequently to reduce dirt brought into the house. Avoid activities that could disturb the soil, such as gardening. Clean your home frequently to keep it as dust free as possible. Water Street resident Steven Allore, along with several other speakers, tried to pin down a more specific timeline for the EPA’s work.

“How long before kids can play back in their yards again?” Allore said. “How long before (a prior speaker) can go canoeing and not worry about falling in and getting cancer? Are we talking 2025, 2040? I’m not talking just here; I’m talking all the way to the lake.”

Pete Mannino, EPA Western New York remediation section chief, explained that the agency couldn’t put a time-frame on the cleanup because it has yet to determine, via testing, the full extent of the contamination.

“Generally, investigations of Superfund sites are complex and take several years,” Mannino said.

But Mannino added that the EPA moves much faster when it identifies immediate threats to human health. He pointed out that when the EPA found contaminants on residential properties on Water Street, the agency put down a temporary cover system, then later bought out and relocated the five affected households.

'Average' cancer rates near Eighteen Mile Creek

LOCKPORT: *Citizens group calls for cancer study, despite Department of Health report.*

BY TIM FENSTER

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Local anti-pollution activists often share stories of loved ones, neighbors and pets who succumbed to cancer, implying the disease

might have been partially a result of contamination in areas like the Eighteen Mile Creek Superfund Site.

Last month, Citizens Against Pollution of Niagara called for a study of cancer rates among residents living near the creek, arguing neighborhoods near the creek are impacted by higher-than-usual rates of severe illness.

"People in that vicinity are impacted at a greater rate by cancer. Disease rates are through the roof there,"

CAPON member Joseph DiPasquale said previously. "We believe there's a link. We want cancer studies so we can make sure that everyone impacted by that can be tested."

But recent data from the New York State Department of Health offers little evidence of contamination driving cancer rates in creek-side neighborhoods to frightening levels.

The health department recorded all statewide cases
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US&J FILE PHOTO

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of cancer from 2011-2015, and provided cancer statistics for each census block over that period. The data was submitted to the state Cancer Registry from hospitals that treat the cancer patients.

One census block in the north central portion of the city, covering the entirety of Eighteen Mile Creek in Lockport's lowertown neighborhood, recorded 36 cases of cancer amongst 1,536 residents — the same number of cases the health department considered to be "expected."

As with most other census blocks, rates for some form of cancer were above expected (kidney cancer), rates for others (prostate cancer) were below expected. The sample size is so small that the health department's expected rates for some forms of cancer is a fraction of a case.

The census block to the northwest, covering the entirety of Eighteen Mile Creek in the Town of Lockport, showed 66 cases among 2,129 residents.

Census blocks bordering the creek in Newfane recorded 282 cases of cancer among 7,472. That's a much higher rate than the Lockport census blocks, though it's worth noting that Newfane blocks that border the creek little or not at all showed 62 cancer cases among 2,076 residents — also much higher than the lowertown area.

CANCER CAUSES

What's more, health department officials point out that environmental factors are not the

leading causes of cancer. A person's age, genetic history and lifestyle choices — particularly tobacco use, diet and alcohol intake — play a far larger role in determining whether an individual will receive that dreaded diagnosis.

Brad Hutton, deputy commissioner for the state Office of Public Health, said it's believed that environmental factors sometimes contribute to cases of leukemia and kidney, brain and lung cancer (though the latter is caused mainly by exposure to tobacco smoke and radon). Rates of those cancers were found to be higher in certain occupational groups.

However, there's no known link between contaminants and breast, cervical, prostate and colorectal cancers, Hutton said.

"It varies for the cancer that we're talking about. For some cancers, it's a more plausible potential cause. For other cancers, there are not known environmental causes," he said.

STUDY SOUGHT

CAPON also blasted the state health department for excluding Eighteen Mile Creek from a recently announced series of regional cancer studies, including one study of eastern Buffalo and western Cheektowaga.

Hutton said the areas selected for studies — also including Warren County, Staten Island and parts of Suffolk County — reported higher-than-expected rates of all categories of cancer. Many census blocks in the east Buffalo/west Cheektowaga region reported cancer rates double that of the lowertown census block.

"All are statistically

elevated above what we'd expect. When we look at those areas, they are overlapping areas where all six cancers are high," Hutton said.

"That's not meant to dismiss concerns in other areas of the state," Hutton added.

Asked about the study, some CAPON member questioned whether five years of data was enough to accurately gauge the long-term health trends of the area.

"It needs to go back a lot farther than that (2011)," said member Anita Mullane. "It needs to go back a generation. I don't believe that's truly representative of what's happening down there."

Several CAPON members said they'd like to see a study of all serious illnesses along the creek corridor.

"There's diseases that aren't called cancer that can be caused by contamination and pollution. ... What we really want is a comprehensive health study," said group member Bill Rutland.

He also pointed to the high levels of lead in the area.

CLEANUP PLANS

Last week, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials outlined their recommended, \$6.7 million plan to remove lead-contaminated soil from dozens of lowertown properties. The plan is the most costly and thorough of three proposed cleanup options.

Agency officials plan to continue testing and issue a final record of decision on the cleanup plan in the coming months. They hope to finalize a work plan by next spring and begin work during the summer.

"They're agreeing to do the most expensive possible

way to clean it up. They're not doing it just because they need the work; they're doing it because the effects of lead are very bad," Rutland said.

Lead-poisoning can cause permanent brain and nerve damage in children. However, there's currently no known link between lead exposure and cancer.

Echoing EPA recommendations, state health department officials urged residents in contaminated areas to maintain grass and mulch cover, avoid digging, use doormats and frequently wash floors.

CAPON member Jean Kiene said creek corridor residents are concerned about other contamination, such as manganese.

The National Institutes of Health found manganese exposure can produce symptoms similar to Parkinson's Disease.

Kiene said that a Mill Street man whose property was found to contain high manganese levels was later diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease.

"We need to have a health study and have it done in a very comprehensive, complete way," Kiene said.

CAPON members also called for health studies in areas of other contaminated sites, such as the infamous Love Canal and Simonds Saw & Steel, a plant on which an area was used to roll uranium for the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission between 1946 and 1956,

In August 2017, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced it would issue a proposed cleanup plan sometime in 2018, following years of testing the site. Their investigation found revealed levels of radioactivity beyond background level in

all of the buildings, the soil and surface water/sediments on the Ohio Street site.

"I believe this county needs a health study more than any other in the state, given the history," Mullane said.

Indeed, Niagara County does post the seventh highest cancer rate of New York state's 62 counties. But the county also lags behind nearby Wyoming (No. 2),

Erie (No. 4) and Chautauqua (No. 5) counties, and is not far ahead of Cattaraugus County (No. 9).

Hutton primarily attributed the county's high cancer rates to age and lifestyle factors. Niagara County's median age is 42.9 — well above the state average of 38.2 — and it's estimated nearly 21 percent of county residents smoke tobacco.

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PLAN...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

EPA says the lead cleanup will allow current and future generations to use their properties without restrictions. Until the cleanup is complete, the agency recommends residents in the affected neighborhood avoid tracking dirt into their homes, clean their floors frequently and bathe any pets that may have come in contact with soil in the area.

Lead exposure can cause severe damage to the nervous and other organ systems, including permanent brain damage in children.

EPA spokesman Michael Basile said the agency will continue testing soils at the affected properties as it develops its Record Of Decision.

"We want to do further testing ... so we can come up with how far into someone's yard we're going to remediate," he said.

EPA officials said that since discovering the contamination, they have moved as quickly as possible to remediate the residential properties.

By contrast, EPA has spent

nearly two years working on its design plan for the second phase of the Eighteen Mile Creek Corridor cleanup, which will cover a nearly one-mile area between the Erie Canal and Harwood Street. EPA officials said in August the design plan might not be finished for another year or two.

"These properties were tested in three different phases in 2017. Here we are in 2018 with a proposed plan. That's lightning speed. That really is," Basile said at the August hearing.

EPA is also testing groundwater and creek sediment between Harwood Street and Lake Ontario in Olcott, for the third and largest phase of the corridor cleanup.

Eighteen Mile Creek has a lengthy history of industrial use dating back to the 1800s. Investigations at the site show that sediment and soil in and around the creek, as well as nearby properties, are contaminated with a variety of pollutants including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and lead.

The former Flintkote plant, at 198 - 300 Mill St., was operated between 1928 and 1971, manufacturing felt products.

LOWERTOWN lead removal plan finalized

ENVIRONMENT: *EPA commits to soil removal and replacement at 28 residential properties.*

BY TIM FENSTER

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JS+J

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Wednesday it has finalized its plan to remove lead-contaminated soil from about 28 residential properties in lowertown.

The approximately \$7 million plan will involve removing 14,000 cubic yards of lead-contaminated soil and transporting the soil to an off-site facility licensed to handle the waste. The excavated areas will then be restored with clean soil.

"Our decision to move forward with the removal of lead from the properties of more than two dozen residences is a major milestone in the long-term cleanup of the Eighteen Mile Creek Superfund site cleanup," EPA Regional Administrator Pete Lopez said.

EPA officials said during an August public hearing on the cleanup that they hope to develop a work design plan by next spring, and put shovels in the ground by next summer.

Residents will remain in their homes throughout the cleanup, though they may be temporarily relocated if they find the construction too bothersome. EPA officials stressed that any temporary relocations would not be related to environmental pollutants.

The affected residences are on Mill, Chapel, Porter, North Adam and Frost streets. The area was contaminated by the old Flintkote plant property in the Eighteen Mile Creek Corridor Superfund site, which is undergoing a multi-phase, extensive remediation effort.