



[https://www.niagara-gazette.com/news/local\\_news/soil-testing-expanding-near-eighteen-mile-creek/article\\_4427062f-041e-5a3f-97e1-1290ecde5023.html](https://www.niagara-gazette.com/news/local_news/soil-testing-expanding-near-eighteen-mile-creek/article_4427062f-041e-5a3f-97e1-1290ecde5023.html)

## Soil testing expanding near Eighteen Mile Creek

**SPOKESMAN:** EPA casting wider net in its sampling of residential properties near the federal Superfund site.

By Philip Gambini [Philip.gambini@niagara-gazette.com](mailto:Philip.gambini@niagara-gazette.com)  
Aug 23, 2017



Investigative soil testing along the polluted Eighteen Mile Creek corridor in the city of Lockport will expand.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is casting a wider net in its sampling of residential properties along the federal Superfund site to examine if contaminants were carried away from the site to area homeowners' properties, according to EPA spokesperson Michael Basile.

The first time resident Shirley Nicholas's soil was tested it turned up alarming levels of lead and she tore out her sprawling backyard garden.

She did so on the advice of EPA staff, she said, which tested her property to determine if it was contaminated by the now demolished Flintkote Industrial Plant, a major historical polluter along the waterway.

Nicholas had grown lettuce, pumpkins, watermelon, tomatoes, rhubarb, three different kind of peppers and "the best horseradish in the city," for family and others in the community, she said.

Her soil was tested twice since 2013, most recently in July, when her property and others on Mill, Chapel and Porter streets were surveyed by EPA. The results of those tests have not yet been distributed.

Basile declined to identify specific soil testing locations and how they were selected, but said the "routine" decision was made "to evaluate whether or not there has been any impact beyond the five homes we ended up purchasing."

The agency bought the properties in light of exposure concerns on Water Street in 2014.

"We haven't confirmed anything else on any other residential properties," Basile said earlier this week.

Earlier this year, Basile presented Nicholas with the EPA's Environmental Champion award. EPA staff described Nicholas as a "critical partner" in selecting a clean-up remedy, including the buyout of the five homes.

Separately, Nicholas was credited for advocacy work on Eighteen Mile Creek by now Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul. When the site was added to the federal superfund list in 2012, Hochul named Nicholas and her friend, Jeane Kiene, as instrumental in the process.

In 2013, the EPA collected 31 samples, over half of which exceeded safe limits for lead, 400 parts per million. Another four samples from Nicholas's Mill Street property exceeded limits by more than double. The highest reading, registered 6 inches below the surface, was more than four times safe levels.

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.

The lead findings dropped her property assessment from about \$58,000 to \$8,600, Nicholas said.

In July, EPA representatives said they were using composite tests to identify heavy metals and other potential contaminants on her property. Labs would review the samples to determine if the toxins were linked to Flintkote.

If not, Nicholas is on her own in terms of addressing the contamination. She is frustrated by the situation, but undeterred, she said.

"It bugs me, yeah, but it bugs me a good way," she said. "They're not going to get me down. I'll take it to my grave if I have to."

Anita Mullane, Lockport's Second Ward alderwoman, said she had not been told the expanded sampling was related to "the results of previous testing," but there are remaining concerns along

Eighteen Mile Creek and elsewhere in the city.

City government is in the process of selecting a committee to address contamination concerns, but Mullane said the group should not be left up to politicians' appointments. A citizen's committee will be formed, she said, simultaneous with the city group.

"We're more than happy to pursue this as citizens, not just as council members," she said Wednesday.

"This has nothing to do politics and everything do with looking out for each other," she added.

## TRENDING VIDEO



## Conversation

FOLLOW



Start the conversation

LOG IN | SIGN UP

ALL COMMENTS

Newest



Start The Conversation

Powered by viafoura

# Niagara Gazette Events

 See All Events  Add your event

Fri, Jun 04

Fri, Jun 04

Sat, Jun 05

Sat, Jun 05



**Delta's Drive In Bingo:**  
**Delta Niagara Falls**  
4735 Drummond Rd

**OBC Weekly Workshop:**  
**The Wonders of Wine!**  
Niagara Falls, ON

**"A Day Of Prayer"**  
Center Court Field

**Niagara River Gorge Hike**  
**and Waterfront Picnic**  
Whirlpool State Park



FRI  
4

SAT  
5

SUN  
6

MON  
7

TUE  
8

WED  
9

THU  
10

FRI  
11

SAT  
12

SUN  
13

MON  
14

TUE  
15

[Philip Gambini](#)