

Battery site cleanup concluding; borough wants land used as park

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THROOP - Active site construction for a project to forever contain toxic lead battery casings and contaminated soil at the Marjol Battery site in Throop will likely be completed within the next six weeks.

Property owner Gould Electronics reached an important milestone last week when it finished laying out a large, black fabric-and-plastic liner that fully enclosed the 10-acre containment area. On Friday, trucks were dumping clean soil on top of the cap, burying it for good.

"We are grateful to the neighbors of the site for tolerating the hassles of a major construction site near their homes," Gould said in a statement Friday. "We are glad to say those hassles are nearly over."

Borough council President Thomas Lukasewicz said the community was happy to see the project close to completion.

"It's been a long time coming for the people of Throop," he said.

The enclosed containment field wasn't the first choice of borough residents, especially neighbors. For years, the borough fought to have the contaminants shipped off the Marjol site, which is sandwiched between the Lackawanna River and a residential community. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency instead chose a plan that would enclose contaminated materials so they could not escape.

Mr. Lukasewicz acknowledged the project so far has been successful.

"There have been some minor occurrences, but they were addressed as quickly as could be," he said. "There otherwise hasn't been anything that has been alarming. Soil sampling since the cleanup hasn't shown any increase (in lead contamination) whatsoever."

The project began in July 2008. Soil with lead contaminants on the 43-acre Marjol site and nearby 100-acre wooded area also owned by Gould were dug up and moved to the containment site, as were lead battery casings that were part of an old landfill.

In the fall, the most important containment cap layer - a clean soil solidified with a concrete-type mixture - was completed, which should seal any contaminants for good. Layers of fabric and plastic were added this spring, with the last layer completed Monday.

After about 2 feet of soil is placed on top of the cap, a layer of topsoil will be added, followed by grass seed.

The EPA has collected samples within the nearby residential community and has not found any more lead contaminants, EPA official Maureen Essentier said.

"I think the project went very well," Ms. Essentier said.

When the project is complete, Gould will be able to sell the land, she said. Much of the land is zoned residential and could be developed. Advanced GeoServices spokeswoman Lisa Ayers said Gould has not made any plans for the property other than completing the project. Advanced GeoServices is representing Gould in the project cleanup.

The Marjol site is south of 100 acres of forestland owned by Gould and another 48 acres of parkland owned by Throop. Mr. Lukasewicz said officials are working to open the wooded land for hiking and nature trails. He is lobbying Gould to link Throop's planned park with the cleaned-up Marjol site to create a 200-acre park in the heart of the Midvalley.

There can be no development for the 10-acre containment site. At the borough's request, Gould is making plans to fence in the site once the project is complete. Gould will have to monitor the site for contaminants annually for at least 30 years, Ms. Essentier said. The EPA has the right to perform site inspections as well, she said.

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