FACT VS. FICTION

Don't expose us to radiological material.

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There is a lot of speculation and misinformation surrounding the West Lake Landfill. Local and state residents deserve to know the truth.

Read below to help separate the myths from facts.

Myth: Moving the West Lake Landfill project to FUSRAP and the Army Corps of Engineers would be the best way to protect us.

Fact: Moving the West Lake Landfill project to FUSRAP means more delays and extra costs.

- By moving the project to FUSRAP and the Army Corps of Engineers, the clean-up process will be delayed, again. The EPA selected the encasement remedy six years ago and the site would have been cleaned-up if not for the actions of opponents.
- The shifting to FUSRAP means that more evaluations and studies will need to be conducted; taking more time and costing the taxpayer more.
- The move does nothing in terms of transferring site control from the EPA. The EPA and FUSRAP/Army Corps would have joint control.
- Transferring the project to FUSRAP also increases taxpayer liability from its current share. Currently, those responsible for West Lake Landfill, like Bridgeton Landfill LLC and Rock Road Industries and others, have the responsibility in paying for the remediation. Under FUSRAP, that burden shifts solely to the taxpayers with the government then going to court to sue the responsible parties.
- According to a Wall Street Journal story from October 30, 2013, FUSRAP's budget was cut by Congress "to about $100 million. FUSRAP has some two dozen projects, including at least one that could cost up to $500 million. That means, if West Lake is transferred to FUSRAP, it could join a long list of other projects and local residents would wait decades to receive the necessary funding for the selected remedy.

Myth: Excavating the West Lake Landfill would be the best approach to cleaning up the site.

Fact: Excavation would be reckless. It would create the highest short-term risks to health and safety by:

- Creating traffic and road safety concerns as a result of ongoing and extended truck traffic leaving the site carrying radiological material on local highways and through neighboring communities and throughout Missouri.
- Threatening commercial and private aircraft operating at Lambert Field by greatly increasing the risk of bird strikes. In addition, this would directly violate a covenant that is in place that prohibits the open exposure of waste.
- Exposing workers to low-level radioactive materials during excavation and handling of currently buried radiologically impacted materials.
- Exposing our communities to low-level radiologically impacted materials from dust emissions during excavation, handling and transportation.

- Creating a threat to neighbors of impacted waste water run-off as a result of soil erosion and changes in rainwater drainage affected by digging.

Myth: The radiological contaminants at the West Lake Landfill threaten public health and safety for the surrounding community.

Fact: After extensive investigations, rigorous testing, and ongoing monitoring—including as recently as 2013—the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has concluded that there are absolutely no health risks to individuals living or working in the vicinity of the West Lake Landfill, or from the landfill to the greater metro St. Louis area. And, by encapsulating the radiological material at the West Lake Landfill, we can ensure that no one ever comes into contact with it.

Myth: There is a fire at the nearby Bridgeton Landfill that could spread to the West Lake Landfill and the radiological contaminants it contains.

Fact: There is no fire. A fire requires oxygen. There is a subsurface smoldering event—a heat-producing reaction causing waste to decompose more quickly than usual—occurring deep within the Bridgeton Landfill, where oxygen does not exist. The subsurface smoldering event is being managed through a variety of containment and remediation efforts.

To reach the radiological material, the subsurface smoldering event would have to migrate a substantial lateral distance and climb up a series of steep quarry walls to reach the contaminated area of West Lake Landfill. In addition, the radiological material disposed at West Lake Landfill was low-level. Scientifically, this material is neither explosive nor vulnerable to heat.

Myth: The subsurface smoldering event at the Bridgeton Landfill poses a risk to the community because of its proximity to the West Lake Landfill.

Fact: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has concluded that the proximity of the subsurface smoldering event to West Lake Landfill is not a threat to the community. According to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), all data indicates the underground smoldering at the Bridgeton Landfill is contained and has not impacted the affected areas at the West Lake Landfill. The EPA has stated that contingency plans will prevent the subsurface smoldering event from ever reaching the radioactive contaminants at the West Lake Landfill. The EPA, MDNR and Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster are supervising the work plan for constructing an isolation barrier between the Bridgeton and West Lake Landfills.

Myth: The radiological contaminants at the West Lake Landfill could spread to the Missouri River, potentially polluting our water.

Fact: There is absolutely no evidence to support this. The Missouri River is more than a mile and a half away from the West Lake Landfill and there is zero evidence of a “plume” of leaching or migrating radioactive material moving from the landfill. Additionally, there are no drinking water wells on or near the landfill, and no radioactive dust or gas is leaving the property. This, however, could change if the West Lake Landfill were to be excavated, which is precisely why it is so important to support the EPA’s 2008 recommended clean-up plan.

Additionally, the radiologically impacted materials at the West Lake Landfill are not at risk of being washed away by a flood. It is important to note that there is a 500 year flood levee that protects Earth City and the location of the landfill. Further, the reality is, even if this levee broke, the majority of the landfill is above the level of flooding that would occur in a 500 year flood event – even in the absence of a levee. EPA already looked at this risk and found that only two feet of the toe or bottom of the landfill would go underwater. To address any concern with that, EPA already adjusted the 2008 Record of Decision, and now, this area would be armored with rip rap to prevent any sort of contamination to the river.

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