

# IDEM, EPA evaluating reuse of Superfund site

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(Photo: 1999 file photo/Journal & Courier)

The state and federal agencies that forced the closure and containment of contaminated materials at the Tippecanoe Sanitary Landfill are now assessing the feasibility of allowing public use of the property just north of Lafayette.

Staff from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency visited the 86-acre site at 2801 N. Ninth Street on July 1, environmental engineering consultant Vicky Keramida said.

“They were extremely impressed with the site,” she said.

“We gave them a tour of the site, explained what’s been going on, and we received a very positive response.”

Keramida on Tuesday briefed members of the Tippecanoe Environmental Response Finance Board on her efforts to win state and federal approval to reuse the land, and to remove the site from the [EPA Superfund](#)

(<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/>) National Priorities List.

The landfill was added in 1990 to the national list of locations where known or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants occurred.

The federal Superfund designation came after the state in 1988 won a protracted legal battle to revoke operator Jerry Schlossberg’s permit based on elevated levels of polychlorinated biphenyls, a [potential carcinogen](http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/hazard/tsd/pcbs/pubs/effects.htm) (<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/hazard/tsd/pcbs/pubs/effects.htm>) that showed up in samples of industrial sludge dumped at the primarily residential waste site.

Schlossberg declared bankruptcy, and left 17 years of waste without the required clay cap to contain the trash, a leachate system to collect water that filters through the trash, vents to release methane gas and wells to monitor groundwater for possible contamination.

The [environmental response board](http://www.lafayette.in.gov/egov/docs/1204236521_432617.pdf) ([http://www.lafayette.in.gov/egov/docs/1204236521\\_432617.pdf](http://www.lafayette.in.gov/egov/docs/1204236521_432617.pdf)), consisting of elected leaders from Lafayette, West Lafayette and Tippecanoe County, was established in 1990. The board purchased the property and negotiated a closure and monitoring agreement with EPA and IDEM.

The board also, from 1994 to 1998, imposed on Tippecanoe County residents an income tax of 25 cents per \$100 of taxable income to finance the landfill closure and long-term environmental testing at the site. Opponents filed suit to stop the tax but lost in court.

The money has been used to install venting and collection systems, conduct lab tests and maintain the property.

After a lengthy planning process with IDEM and EPA, local monitoring and maintenance of the site began in June 2000.

A [10-year review](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/fiveyear/f2010050003552.pdf) (<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/fiveyear/f2010050003552.pdf>) conducted by the EPA “found that the remedy is protective of human health and the environment” and said “any potential threats have been addressed.” The report also stated the site is ready for reuse.

Keramida, who was hired by local officials virtually from the start of the arduous process, is beginning to review with state and federal regulators every document, risk assessment, cleanup commitment and monitoring test result filed during the Superfund process.

Before the grounds can be opened for public use, local leaders must prove the site no longer poses an environmental or health risk, said Michael Anderson, a risk assessor from IDEM's office of land quality.

The conceptual plan will outline each recreational use and the protective systems in place to prevent exposure to contaminants, Anderson said.

Because the site is self-contained, Anderson said his primary concern is to make sure people cannot break through the clay cap and come in contact with buried trash.

"I will look at each activity and see if that plan is comprehensive, accurate and has appropriate controls in place to ensure there is no contact with contaminants," he said.

"As long as they don't disrupt the cover ... there should be no reason they couldn't use that."

Anderson said he and the risk assessor from EPA Region 5 have talked and share a similar approach to the project.

"I think it will be a pretty consistent process, but it does complicate it because it involves two regulatory agencies," he said.

The public will be invited to comment at a future date as part of the review.

Anthony Benton, an attorney with Stuart & Branigin, has provided legal counsel to local leaders since the start of the landfill saga.

"I hope the site can be used by the public that paid the taxes to clean up the site," he said.

John Knochel, chairman of the board and a county commissioner, said the landfill offers a beautiful view of Wildcat Creek and a nearby lake.

"We would have very limited possibilities of putting any structures up that include any kind of a foundation because that would dig into the clay cap," he said.

"There could be walking trails and mainly a park area where people could picnic."

Knochel said the county park board may seek a grant to purchase the lake next to the landfill.

There have been informal conversations about potential uses, parks and recreation Superintendent Allen Nail said.

"There certainly would be restrictions and limitations to the recreational uses," he said.

"When the time comes, the park board will discuss what are the options down the road."

The environmental response board would remain in charge of maintaining the clay cap, methane collection and groundwater monitoring, Anderson and Keramida said.

"The point is that over the last 20 years there has been a significant amount of money spent to render the site nonthreatening to public reuse," Keramida said.

Keramida said she will initially work with IDEM and the EPA to win approval to reuse the property. She expected the EPA will remove the landfill from the National Priorities List within 18 months.

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