

BACKGROUND

Onondaga County plans to build an outdoor event complex on a 315-acre wastebed site (“Wastebeds 1-8”) on the west shore of Onondaga Lake. The current design features an amphitheater with covered and lawn seats (capacity 17,500 people), a vendor/festival area, a smaller outdoor community theater, a “nature” area, recreational trails, and other amenities.

What are Wastebeds 1-8?

Wastebeds 1-8 are part of the Onondaga Lake Superfund site. Honeywell is legally responsible for remediating (“cleaning up”) the wastebeds in a manner that protects human health and the environment.

The wastebeds, which lie along the lakeshore, are mostly composed of relatively non-hazardous “Solvay waste” piled up to 80 feet high. Other industrial waste, including hazardous material, was also dumped at this site. This additional waste contains benzene and hexavalent chromium (known human carcinogens), as well as naphthalene, ethylbenzene, phenols, PCBs, PAHs, toluene, xylene, DDT, mercury, and arsenic. Because disposal of these wastes was sporadic and undocumented, the exact amount and location of these hazardous chemicals are unknown. Without more careful testing in the interior of the site, particularly within Wastebed 6, the proposed site for the amphitheater lawn seating and the smaller outdoor community theater, the scope of the hazard is difficult to judge.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Currently the public only has 30 days (July 9-August 11) to read and provide feedback on the 654-page Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and only one public hearing is scheduled. **Write or email your County legislator to ask for an extension of the public comment period and request that additional public hearings be held** in a variety of locations and at different times of day. To find contacts for County legislators, visit: www.ongov.net/legislature/members.html
Make sure to share your comments with:
 - Ryan McMahon, Onondaga County Legislature Chairman, ryanmcmahon@gmail.com
 - Mike Plochocki, Onondaga County Legislature Environmental Protection Committee Chairman, mikeplochocki@hotmail.com
 - David Coburn, Director of Onondaga County Office of the Environment, DavidCoburn@ongov.net
- **Make your voice heard at the County’s public hearing** on July 23 at 11AM in the County Court House Legislative Chambers (401 Montgomery St, Syracuse).
- **Review and submit comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement** (DEIS), available at: <http://www.ongov.net/environment/amphitheaterdocs.html>
- **Learn more about the project and share information with others.**

DO WE REALLY NEED AN AMPHITHEATER ON AN INDUSTRIAL WASTE DUMP?

*Important Information
and
Questions to Consider*

FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

The economic viability of this project is questionable, given expected competition from other regional venues and the lack of a concrete business plan.

Amphitheaters that are only open in the summer season often lose money and require support in the form of tax dollars or corporate sponsorship.

The County has assumed, rather than demonstrated, that there will be economic benefits for nearby communities.

It remains unclear what the exact cost to taxpayers will be. In addition to the construction and maintenance of the proposed facilities, Onondaga County will incur costs for water and sewer service development, use of NYS Fair parking lots, and traffic management measures (which may include road construction).

NOISE CODE VIOLATIONS

The County has done a very superficial noise impacts analysis that fails to account for the greater distances that sound can travel over water (thereby impacting Liverpool residents). Nor has the County analyzed cumulative noise impacts from the State Fair and Lake Amphitheater.

The expected high noise levels from concerts will violate noise codes in the Town of Geddes and village of Liverpool. The County has not developed a concrete plan for mitigating noise; it has suggested that some stage modifications might be made as problems arise, and that

residents might consider staying indoors or leaving the area during concerts.

HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS

The project relies on a Superfund “cleanup” plan that has yet to be designed, let alone completed or tested, to protect the public from dangerous exposure to site contaminants.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that health risks to amphitheater attendees are within “acceptable” ranges, but risks to young children (children under 6) have never been evaluated. Moreover, EPA’s determination was based on limited data about the distribution of hazardous chemicals in the interior of the proposed amphitheater site. Even with this limited analysis, EPA says that construction workers developing the site should wear protective clothing and equipment to protect themselves.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The proposed amphitheater project will build over or landscape at least 70 acres of previously undeveloped land – almost one-fourth of the undeveloped or minimally developed land along the Lake. The location of this site may create a barrier to wildlife movement along the western shore of the Lake.

The amphitheater is likely to affect many more acres due to noise/vibrations, lights, litter,

polluted stormwater runoff, and intensified human presence. If the facility succeeds in booking full summer seasons, there may be negative impacts to birds or other wildlife that are breeding or rearing young.

SHUTTING THE PUBLIC OUT OF DECISION-MAKING

The County decided to construct an “events complex” without seeking any public input on whether this would be a desirable use of the site.

The project is being pushed forward on an accelerated timeline that does not allow adequate time for review of risks or meaningful public input. Construction is slated to begin in the fall of 2014.

Multiple elements of the County’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) rely on yet-to-be-determined remediation, site management, and health and safety plans. The public is expected to evaluate and comment upon the DEIS in “good faith” that the County will ultimately find ways to adequately address all of the unique challenges at this site.

The County has failed to consider a variety of alternatives to this project. For example, why not renovate the nearby NYS Fair Grandstand instead of building a new facility on a polluted site?

Contact Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation for more information:
www.peacecouncil.net/noon/amphitheater
or 315-472-5478.