

18 acres of Croton Point dump to be resealed

Keith Eddings

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CROTON-ON-HUDSON — Westchester will spend about \$8 million to reseat 18 acres of the dump at Croton Point after state environmental officials found that the county's failure to maintain the seal has caused garbage to settle unevenly, exposing the waste below.

The county also will upgrade the system that collects contaminated runoff oozing from the section of the dump, known as Railroad One, and will rebuild the underground maze of pipes that capture gases produced by the decomposing waste.

The pipes were installed after Railroad One was first capped in 1986 and were upgraded in 1991, when a plume of methane gas migrated from under the dump to the county park on the Croton Point peninsula, where it killed trees. The system was upgraded again in 1996, but has since been damaged by the rainwater flowing into the dump through the eroded seal.

The agreement with the state Department of Environmental Conservation requires Westchester to cover the dump with 130,000 cubic

yards of fill, enough to bury all 18 acres three feet deep. The county will then lay a polyethylene seal across the fill and cover it with another layer of dirt, which will be planted with grasses. About 200 trees will be removed from around the dump, including 96 that will be transplanted in the nearby park.

The Railroad One landfill is adjacent to a much larger dump, the Croton Landfill, which also has been closed and sealed. The Railroad One dump opened in 1980 to take in trash diverted from the Croton Landfill. It operated for two years, taking in between 510,000 and 780,000 cubic yards of waste. The larger landfill opened in 1928 and closed in 1986. It was sealed in 1995 with a more advanced polyethylene cap similar to the one that will be installed over the Railroad One dump.

Spokesmen for the county and the state DEC said the seal over the main dump is intact.

"That one, we do annual maintenance on to make sure that the integrity stays there," said Adam Zabinski, first deputy commissioner of the county Department of Environmental Facilities. "It's held up quite well."

The most recent round of troubles at the Railroad One dump began Feb. 12, 2001, when DEC inspectors visited the site at Westchester's invitation after the county found the seal was failing. The inspectors also found that a half-acre pond had formed atop the dump.

In the consent decree that resulted, the county admitted it has "not adequately maintained the closed landfill" as required by law and agreed to "aggressively" seek to fix it. The county also agreed to a \$25,000 fine, which the state suspended for as long as the county adheres to the remediation schedule.

The schedule requires the county to start installing the new cap by Nov. 30, complete it within a year and have vegetation growing atop the new cap by June 2005. The county must submit a new plan for maintaining the seal by June 2003.

Negotiators opted not to fight the state's finding. Susan Tolchin, chief adviser to County Executive Andrew Spano, said the county conceded its failure to maintain the seal in order to obtain state aid for the project. "They promised to give us \$2 million if we said that," Tolchin said.