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Stimulus will help clean Shpack

By Gerry Tuoti, Staff Writer

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NORTON -

Buoyed by \$5 million in federal stimulus funding, the cleanup of radiological waste at the former **Shpack landfill** is expected to be completed by September 2010.

“That’s funding that we needed to continue the project,” said Timothy Beauchemin, project manager for the Army Corps of Engineers.

The Corps is supervising the removal of radiologically contaminated material from the site. Once that work is finished next fall, the Environmental Protection Agency will guide the cleanup of non-radiological contaminants.

So far, approximately 15,000 cubic yards of contaminated materials, more than half of the estimated total, has been removed from the Shpack site and shipped off to a specially designed storage facility in Utah.

Beauchemin expects all the remaining contaminated material to be excavated by the end of this year. It will then be sorted and processed before being sent out of state for safe storage.

The radiological waste poses a danger to people if its particles are consumed or inhaled.

“If people were to breath in the dust, that would pose the risk,” Beauchemin said. “It doesn’t get in the groundwater, so as long as it’s covered, it’s safe.”

Located on an 8-acre parcel along the Norton-Attleboro line, the Shpack Landfill accepted industrial and domestic waste from 1946 to 1965. The site contains contaminants including radioactive compounds, volatile organic compounds and heavy metals. The government began investigating the site in 1978, after a resident detected elevated levels of radioactivity.

The Army Corps of Engineers’ role at the site focuses on radioactive waste, which is believed to have come from Metals and Controls Inc., which is now Texas Instruments, and the local jewelry industry.

The cleanup has suffered difficulties in securing funding in the past, with work stopping for a year in 2006 due to a funding shortfall. Beauchemin said that was caused, in part, by the discovery that the Shpack site contained five times the level of contaminants as was previously thought.

For each of the past three years, however, the Army Corps of Engineers has gotten \$10 million on funding, with an additional \$5 million this year from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“We expect that to carry us through to the end,” Beauchemin said.

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