Safe Removal of Nuclear Weapons Wastes is Needed at West Lake Landfill

Thousands of tons of nuclear weapons wastes are near an underground fire at the West Lake Landfill in north St. Louis County. The radioactive wastes originated in the 1940s and 1950s when Mallinckrodt Chemical Works, near downtown St. Louis, processed uranium in secrecy for nuclear weapons. The wastes were illegally dumped at the landfill in 1973.

The West Lake wastes threaten drinking water. The radioactive wastes are contaminating groundwater at the landfill in the Missouri River floodplain. The groundwater flows into the Missouri River — upstream from public drinking water intakes for north St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis. Radioactive contamination in groundwater has increased over the last decades and will likely continue unless the radioactive wastes are safely removed. Major floods or earthquakes could increase the risk of further groundwater contamination.

The wastes threaten the air we breathe. Radon gas and its radioactive decay particles are escaping from the landfill.

West Lake wastes contain some of the world's most toxic of all radionuclides on Earth, according to the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency. Many are harmful even in microscopic amounts. These radionuclides include thorium-230, radium-223, uranium-235, protactinium-231, actinium-227, and lead-210. Some of these will remain radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years. Swallowing, inhaling, or other exposure to radioactive materials can cause birth defects, cancer and other diseases.

An underground fire has been discovered near the radioactive wastes. Scientists have determined that fire could increase the risk of the spread of radioactivity.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the right agency to clean up West Lake's radioactive wastes. The Corps has experts in radioactive and hazardous wastes, explosives, and landfills. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for West Lake as an EPA Superfund site. The Corps has had responsibility for cleaning up nuclear weapons sites elsewhere in the U.S., including locations also contaminated with nuclear weapons wastes in metro St. Louis.

Our federal government creates nuclear weapons. As with other nuclear weapons wastes sites in the United States, our federal government has the responsibility to clean up the nuclear weapons wastes at West Lake Landfill.

Who supports transferring West Lake's radioactive wastes to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers? St. Louis County Council, City of St. Louis Board of Aldermen, St. Charles County Council, Pattonville School District, Pattonville Fire Protection District, DePaul Hospital SSM, North County Incorporated, many local and state elected officials, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary, Just Moms STL, and the Missouri Coalition for the Environment.

For more information contact:
Just Moms STL westlakemoms@gmail.com stlradwastelegacy.com
Missouri Coalition for the Environment moenviron@moenviron.org moeviron.org

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A Few Examples of West Lakes's Radioactive Hazards:

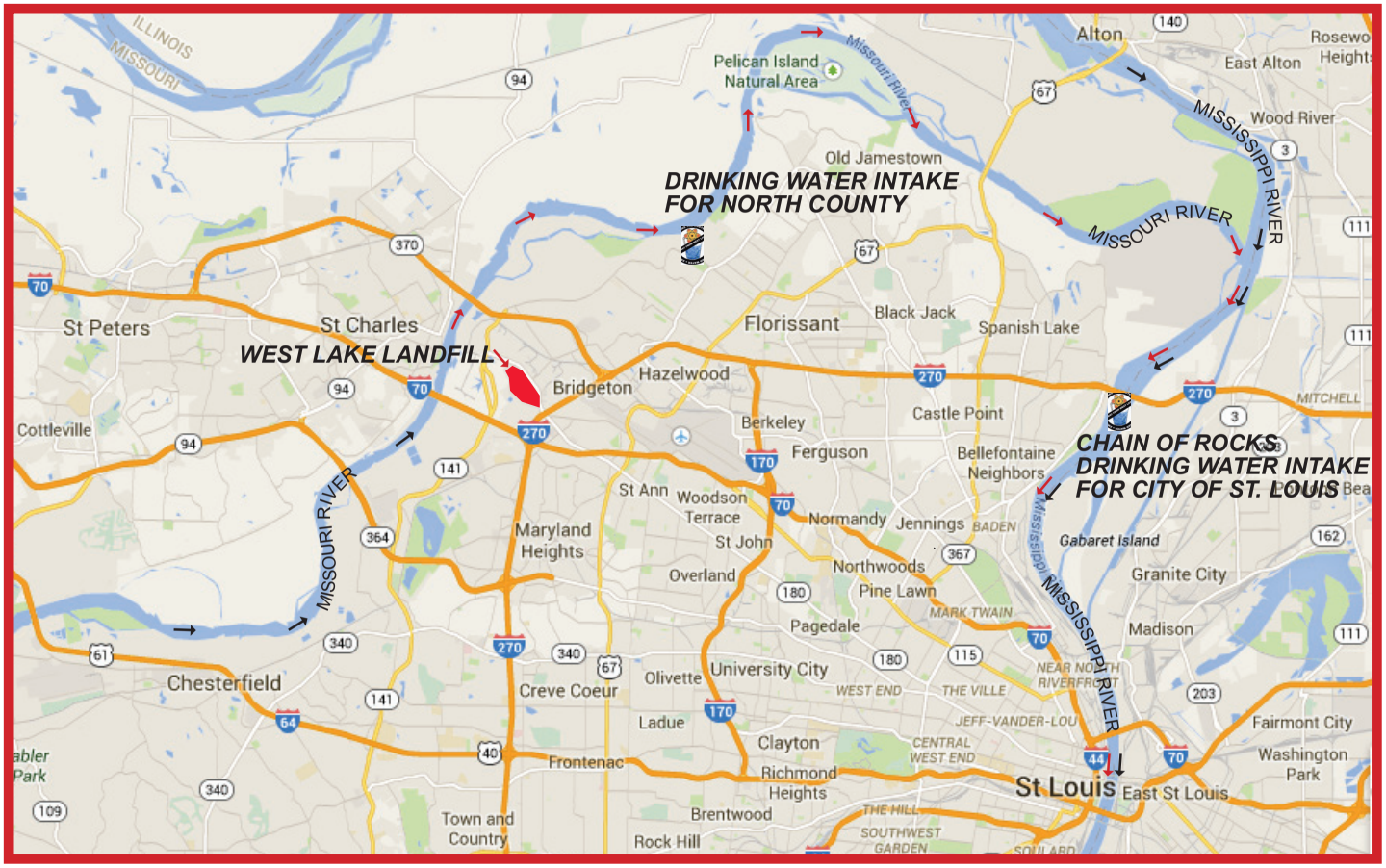
	IN NATURE	AT WEST LAKE
thorium-230	less than 1 picocurie per gram	178,000 pCi/g
radium-223	below detection in the U.S.	1,097 pCi/g
uranium-235	below detection in the U.S.	774 pCi/g
gamma radiation	40 to 50 counts per minute	2,288,000 CPM

Sources: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Summary Report: Radioactive Material in the West Lake Landfill, June 1988; Remedial Investigation Report prepared for the Respondents' Group by EMSI, April 2000

How you can help!

Please go to www.moenviron.org to sign a letter asking U.S. Senators Claire McCaskill and Roy Blunt and Congress members William Lacy Clay and Ann Wagner to work to transfer responsibility for West Lake's radioactive wastes to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Remove the radioactive wastes NOW!!

Protect Metro St. Louis' water and air from West Lake Landfill's radioactive contamination!

West Lake Landfill: Remove the radioactive wastes from Metro St. Louis - - NOW!