

*This edition of the West Valley WasteWatch is dedicated to the cheerful memory of MaryAnne Coyle, activist, writer, artist and inspirer, who worked for a world free of nuclear power and weapons.*

**Secrecy & Shifting Ground at West Valley:  
Moving a Storm Water Outfall Pipe & A Troubling Lack of Information**

There is constant engineering work going on at the West Valley nuclear and hazardous waste site to battle the forces of nature, erosion, stream cutting and flooding. We worry about a day when there are no government agencies or contractors at West Valley doing this essential routine work. We hope these efforts are holding back the inevitable physical processes that will unleash the nuclear and toxic wastes to streams and creeks, communities, swimmers, boaters, fish, drinking water supplies and eventually the Great Lakes and beyond.

***But who really knows what is going on at the site, and how can we learn more?***

There are annual reports publically available from the Department of Energy (DOE) [See [www.wv.doe.gov](http://www.wv.doe.gov) click on ASERs Annual Site Environmental Reports) and NY State Energy Resource and Development Authority (NYSERDA) which provide information from the year before. There are other documents such as the DOE West Valley Decommissioning Plan, also online. But for current information, DOE requires that all documents be requested through the Freedom of Information Act process which literally can take years. For example, information on radioactive contamination under the proposed high level waste storage pad was not released and the pad was built on top of it anyway. Sometimes, the wrong documents are provided taking up more time. While Quarterly Public Meetings are held and accessible by conference phone line, these convey limited information and provide the chance for direct discussion only within limited time frames.

***Behind Closed Doors: Moving the Storm Water Outflow***

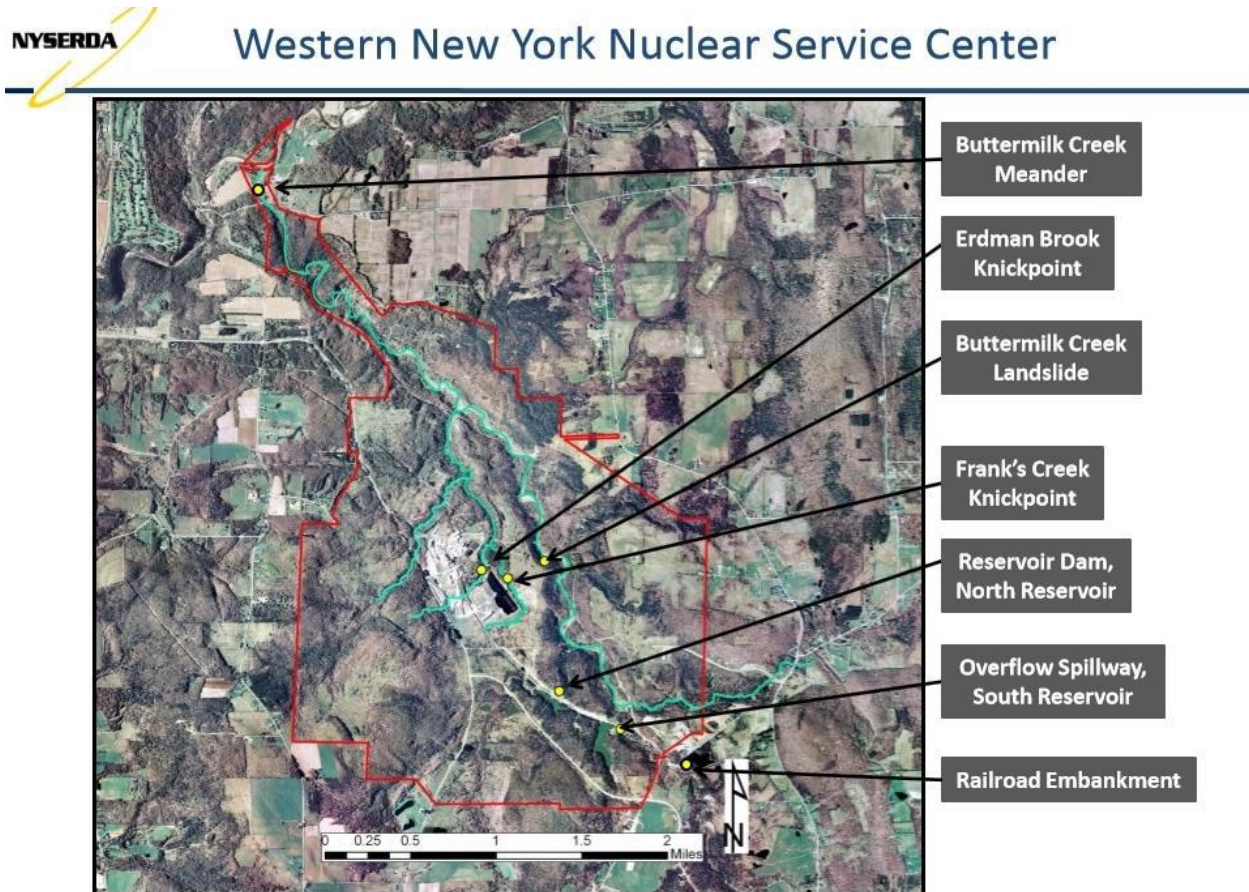
The Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Wastes, Citizens' Environmental Coalition, Concerned Citizens of Cattaraugus County, Sierra Club and Nuclear Information and Resource Service learned early in 2015 that there is an engineering project planned at West Valley that would move an outflow for storm water from one place that is eroding to another location on one of the creeks on the north plateau of the site.

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) had a public comment period on the DOE proposal to move an "outfall pipe" that drains storm water from the site into a creek which runs into the Cattaraugus Creek which gushes into Lake Erie at Sunset Bay. Neither DEC nor DOE made the actual application public. After two Freedom of Information Act requests, still no application. An obvious concern is that storm water that flows on and from the West Valley site likely picks up contamination. Construction of new drainage (or failure to do so) could release contamination and accelerate erosion. The project appears to involve extensive digging and construction in what we understand to be a very contaminated part of the site, on the north plateau near Lagoon 3. The lagoons were holding ponds for radioactive effluents from reprocessing in 1966-1972 and management of the burial grounds and since then for liquid waste and waste water. There are routine deliberate releases from the site into the creek(s) at "legal" levels. It is legal but not safe to release some radioactive and hazardous materials into the environment.

The groups commented to DEC but are still requesting a clearer understanding of the project which apparently has been under consideration since at least 2011. Some of the material gathered indicates this project is part of a much larger one that has 3 phases, including changes to the wastewater treatment plant operation, excavating and removal of Lagoon 3 and rerouting effluent from Lagoon 4 & 5. The larger project clearly involves hazardous waste

remediation related to radioactive and other toxic material, including mercury. This has important implications and unfortunately the full scope of this project has not yet been made public.

Groups are advocating that a state pollution discharge elimination permit (SPDES) on the construction activity include every effort to **prevent releases**. It should be prepared in the context of the larger whole project with public input even if a Consent Order is used to authorize the project. In addition, there should be a DEC employee hired to be an on-site monitor during construction. We need full public information disclosure on the radioactive and hazardous releases from West Valley.



*This aerial photograph shows the West Valley site and surrounding area with some of the places where erosion is active. Note that waste is buried and stored near the Erdman Brook and Frank's Creek nickpoints.*

*For More Information on West Valley: Nuclear Information and Resource Service [dianed@nirs.org], Citizens' Environmental Coalition [warrenba@msn.com], Indigenous Women's Initiatives [nyawehskanoh@gmail.com], Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Wastes [WV-DigItUp@roadrunner.com]  
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