

West Cayuga Island

Site Investigation



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and New York State Department of Health (DOH) are conducting an investigation of the western tip of Cayuga Island, Niagara Falls, to ensure the protection of public health and the environment.

Recent Activities at Cayuga Island

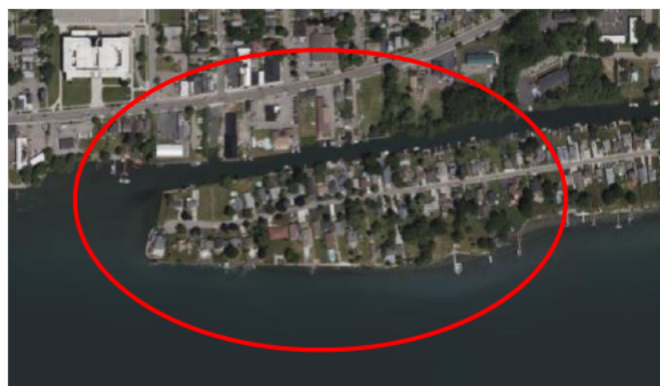
Recent soil data submitted to DEC from parties performing utility work in the West Rivershore Drive right of way on the western tip of Cayuga Island demonstrated the presence of contaminated fill. Subsurface soil samples had elevated levels of several contaminants that may be related to industrial material. DEC followed up by collecting soil samples in the West Rivershore Right of Way in October 2025. Results were consistent with historical data and showed exceedances of DEC screening levels in residential settings for several contaminants. Based on this new information, the historic use of fill in creating Cayuga Island, and revised requirements for addressing contamination, DEC and DOH are conducting an investigation to assess the potential for legacy contamination to affect soil and indoor air quality in the area.

Background

The western end of Cayuga Island was extended in the early 1900s and again between 1958 and 1962 using fill that included industrial material. In 1992 and 1993, DEC, in cooperation with DOH, conducted site assessments and sampling. These assessments identified sporadic contamination of mercury, pesticides, and other contaminants in surface and subsurface soils. Notices detailing the contaminant levels were provided to each property owner. Working with DOH, property owners were notified that they should contact DEC or DOH if they were going to be performing ground-intrusive work on their properties. The site was delisted from the State's registry of Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Sites in 1995.



1927 aerial photo of western tip of Cayuga Island



Current aerial photo of western tip of Cayuga Island

Sampling Investigation

DEC and DOH developed a sampling plan for western Cayuga Island properties that will evaluate whether contaminants of potential concern are present at each property. This investigation will help inform any additional steps needed to address contaminants and ensure the protection of Cayuga Island residents and the environment. DEC's sampling plan includes three components:

- Collecting and testing surface soil samples at up to four locations from each property by hand digging or augering;

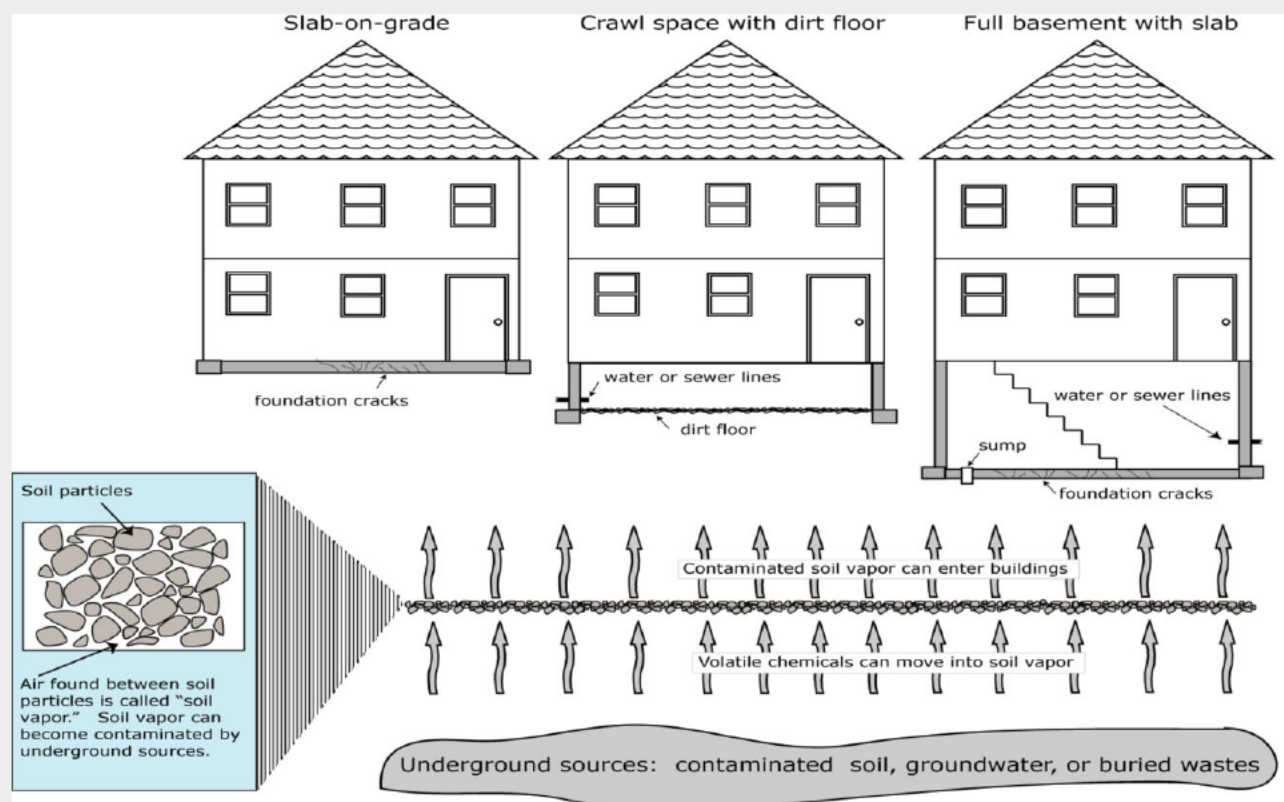
- Collecting and testing sub-slab soil vapor and indoor air samples to determine if chemicals underground are entering the indoor air of a building through the basement, crawlspace, or slab – a process called soil vapor intrusion; and
- Collecting and testing sump water samples from homes with sumps.

DEC and DOH will ensure potential exposure concerns are addressed and will work closely with the Cayuga Island community to prevent potential impacts to public health and the environment.

DEC and DOH are seeking the cooperation of property owners to participate in the State's sampling efforts to delineate the type and extent of potential contaminants in the community. Timely responses to the sampling offer are critically important, particularly for the soil vapor intrusion and indoor air assessments, to help plan and conduct testing during the winter heating season. Winter is the best time to assess soil vapor intrusion since heating systems are generally in operation and doors and windows are closed. All work associated with property investigation, cleanup, and restoration of properties to pre-cleanup conditions will be completed at no cost to the homeowner.

WHAT IS SOIL VAPOR INTRUSION

Soil vapor intrusion is a process by which chemicals in the ground can enter the indoor air of a building through the basement, crawlspace, or slab, as depicted in the graphic below.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Sarah Whiteway

Public Participation Specialist

New York State Department of Environmental
Conservation

700 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209

P: (716) 851-7192 |

sarah.whiteway@dec.ny.gov

www.dec.ny.gov

Daniel (Dan) Tucholski

Public Health Specialist II - Bureau of
Environmental Exposure Investigation

New York State Department of Health

Empire State Plaza – Corning Tower,

Albany, NY 12237

P: (518) 486-7016

bee@health.ny.gov

<https://www.health.ny.gov>