
The West Lake Landfill and Landscape

Planting trees, watering flowers and grass, cleaning up litter, these are all signs of helping our environment. We should always be trying to help our environment grow and flourish. If we stop cleaning up the Earth horrible things could happen to it. It could become polluted, messy, unfit to live in, and detrimental to all of us. We all want to live in a clean healthy environment, so we should all help to make the environment beautiful. Two years ago, my sister enlisted into the army national guard, she completed her basic training in Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

After basic training she then went to St. Louis, Missouri, it was then that I discovered that in that town something horrible was happening, not only to the earth but to the people there as well. The area in St. Louis, Missouri that is harming the residents is called the West Lake Landfill. This landfill has radioactive waste buried underground clear back from World War II and the Cold War as a result of the Manhattan Project. What the major problem is, is that elected officials are moving so slow on this project to clean up this landfill. It is hazardous and very unsafe for citizens to live around. This has been an ongoing issue but has come to life as a very needed cleanup by nearby residents. This project needs to be done as safely and as quickly as possible for the sake of the residents surrounding this disaster.

The West Lake Landfill, Inc. property is a two hundred-acre area in Bridgeton, St. Louis County, Missouri, on the outside of the city of St. Louis. It is about four miles west of St. Louis' Lambert Field International Airport, near the intersection of interstate highways 1-70 and 1-270. Limestone was quarried there from 1939 to 1987. Also, on the property is an industrial complex where concrete ingredients are measured and combined, and where asphalt aggregate is prepared. Since 1962, portions of the property have been used as landfills for disposing of municipal refuse, industrial solid and liquid wastes, and construction demolition debris. In 1973, soil contaminated with radioactive material was placed in a landfill there.

The West Lake Landfill has been an ongoing issue for years upon years now. It has gained more and more speculation as there has been discovered that there is an underground fire now only a shocking six hundred feet from where the nuclear waste has been buried (LaCarpa). This fire was discovered back in 2010, this fire has been burning for the past eight years as far as we know, and officials say that it has the potential to burn for another five or even up to ten years more (Hsieh). This is so shocking that nothing is being done about this, there have been plans to get this disaster under control and nothing has come of it yet. If this fire reaches the landfill it could be catastrophic for everyone living there. There have been many plans to remove this nuclear waste, but none have been active, the residents living in that area have tried multiple times to be heard out and to get this disaster fixed so they can go back to living their normal lives before this disaster had happened.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has finalized its plan to remove radioactive waste from the West Lake Landfill Superfund site. The solution that they have chosen will remove about seventy percent of the site's radioactivity and dispose of the waste at an out-of-state facility. The two hundred and five-million-dollar plan is similar, but less expensive, to what officials had proposed in a meeting before. The EPA plan calls for the waste to be dug out from the landfill. Between eight and twenty feet of waste will be removed, depending on the

concentration and depth of the radioactive material, which shows how much nuclear waste is really there. The waste will then be transported to one of four potential out-of-state facilities, these facilities have not been named yet.

These chemicals are not welcome by anyone anywhere, but I supposed that the government thinks having a small amount of nuclear waste in different areas will make this is sure better because there will not be so much in one area all together. Only seventy percent of these chemicals will be removed, by removing seventy percent of these chemicals they are within the legal limit of dangerous chemicals being allowed in a certain area. With that being said, there will still be thirty percent of these dangerous chemicals left in that area. The chemicals will still seep into the soil and run into the water harming the life that lives there. While removing seventy percent of the chemicals is a great improvement it still does not fix what is going on in this town.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will spend the next year and a half determining how to clean up the site, how to keep workers and the community safe, and exactly where the waste will go. During that time, agency officials will decide where to send seventy-five thousand cubic yards of contamination and how exactly workers will be protected during excavation. While they have discovered a plan that will work for this community, there will still be thirty percent of the nuclear waste at the cite. By helping this neighborhood, they will be hurting a new neighborhood by moving the nuclear waste to a new location. Moving nuclear waste still does not solve the problem of it being buried underground. This problem will just move to a new city and everywhere this nuclear waste goes there will be problems.

Another problem that this radioactive waste is causing is that chemicals are getting into the Missouri River. This river is a major river and for it to be filled with toxic chemicals and radioactive waste is very harmful. The residents around this disaster cannot even drink their own water coming into their homes, they must buy bottled water for every use that they would need water for. It is not directly affecting the Missouri River, it is affecting a tributary to that river which is called Coldwater Creek.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's public health assessment, states that residents who were exposed to the area around Coldwater Creek had a higher risk of exposure to radioactive contaminants, and because of that they have a higher risk of bone cancer, lung cancer or leukemia. That is a huge sign that this neighborhood is in big trouble. These chemicals that are buried underground in St. Louis, Missouri are not something to just be left lie around like they are nothing. These chemicals have the potential to kill people no matter what age. Radioactive waste generated from work on the Manhattan Project was stored in an open site close to the creek.

Over years, that waste migrated into the dirt of the Coldwater Creek bed. A report from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services found an increased rate of certain types of cancer in the area around the creek. This is a major issue that needs to be taken care of so everyone surrounding this disaster can stay healthy while dealing with this issue (Providing hard facts and scientific evidence about the West Lake Landfill).

This is a very serious issue that needs to be taken care of as soon as possible. Many people don't know about this happening, in a way it feels like it is hidden from s because of how horrible this issue is. Many people have had to completely relocate and start their lives over due to this disaster. If this issue does not get fixed it will only get worse and cause more and more

people to relocate. Soon this place will be deserted by every person that has lived there due to the severe threat it has on their lives. Raising children in an environment that has toxic chemicals is detrimental to their wellbeing. These chemicals are going to continue to get into the water more and more and it is going to make that whole town unlivable.

The contaminants will just keep getting into the water and soil until this is taken care of. The water is contaminated in Coldwater Creek, which will flow into the Missouri river. With this water contaminated it is harming the wildlife in and around it. The fish are dying off because of the harsh chemicals. Any animal that drinks that contaminated water will eventually die. If there are people swimming, kayaking, or even standing in the water it could harm them. This is such a serious issue that needs to be taken care of so that it does not harm any more people than it already has. The sooner cleanup can start the sooner the harmful contamination can be taken care of so the residents of St. Louis, Missouri do not have to worry about their health longer than they already have. Even after this cleanup is done there will still be thirty percent of the chemicals left and that will be hazardous still. Residents will most likely have to make frequent checkups to their doctors to make sure that they are healthy.

Getting the West Lake Landfill cleaned up would eliminate a lot of concerns for the community of St. Louis, Missouri. This is a big disaster that I never knew about for many years. I am grateful for learning about this and ways that officials are trying to fix and cleanup this disaster finally after all of these years. This will be a very costly project but spending money on this cleanup will help make people and animals in this community healthy again. This community will not have to fight everyday for something to be done about dangerous chemicals in their air and water that could potentially kill them. With this cleanup taking place there will be a lot less to worry about and everyone will be able to live normal lives finally.

This community deserves to be healthy and have clean air and water as well as the rest of the people do on earth. This was a horrible disaster and while cleanup will take years everyone will be happy with the satisfaction knowing that all their fighting and protesting is finally paying off and they are getting what they wanted. This proves a huge point to myself as well as others I hope, and that is we can achieve anything as long as we set our minds to it. If you want something bad enough then you work long and hard to achieve that goal. I believe that the people from St. Louis, Missouri are finding out that if you want something, especially as bad as they want their neighborhood cleaned up, that you must put in a lot of work. It is not easy to fight for something that is right when other people do not want you to say anything about it.

The community from St. Louis, Missouri were turned down multiple times because this was not a big deal in congresses eyes, after they kept fighting to get this cleaned up and made them see how awful that this neighborhood really is, they then began to realize this was something that needed to be taken care of. I am sure that when they brought up this subject about the West Lake Landfill that congress did not want to spend all this money to clean up what has been there for years. This is a very costly project, this is costing the government two hundred and five million dollars. They could have spent this money on anything else, but they made the right decision by helping out this community.

Cleaning up the West Lake Landfill will make this neighborhood grow again. Many people have moved or relocated until this project is over with, they do not want to risk their health to live in their house. Some people do not have enough money to move away and it is difficult to sell their houses to relocate because the houses for sale in that area have lost most of their value and

nobody want to live their due to this disaster. For the people still living in St. Louis Missouri, seeing all of their friends and family move away makes them want their neighborhood cleaned up even more because they want their neighborhood to be full of people and everyone to be happy like it was before this disaster happened to all of them.

The people from St. Louis, Missouri fought long and hard with countless hours of work to get to where they are today. There is no doubt in my mind that they will not stop protesting until all of this radioactive waste is out of their air and water. Nobody deserves to live in an unfit environment such as that. If you were living in St. Louis, Missouri right now I am sure you would either relocate or join the fight for a clean and healthy neighborhood just like all their community members are and have been doing now for years. It is good to see that our government has finally realized how horrible of a situation this really is and that they are finally taking action to provide their help to this community that has suffered so much due to this disaster.

This project needs to be done as safely and as quickly as possible for the sake of the residents surrounding this disaster. When the Earth is not taken care of, we pay for it, so we need to continuously try to keep the Earth as clean as we possibly can so we can have a long and healthy life and the Earth can do the same. Pollution, radioactive waste, toxic waste, littering, and our own carelessness is what is making the Earth so unhealthy lately, I am sure there are more disaster that be do not know about beside the West Lake Landfill and they will come out eventually too after they realize the West Lake Landfill Project will begin.

While this disaster is not going to be completely cleaned up, residents will still fight to have this all cleaned up because everyone wants a safe and clean neighborhood to grow up in and not have to worry about you or your kids living in unfit conditions such as these people in St. Louis Missouri have to worry about every single day of their lives. The Government needs to work faster to clean this radioactive waste up, cleaning this up will help it not spread and harm more people instead of not worrying about it like they have been doing for years now and getting away with it.