

Luster urges cleanup of Ithaca Falls

2A/LOCAL NEWS

The Ithaca JOURNAL

Serving Tompkins County since 1815

Thursday

August 17, 2000

www.theithacajournal.com

Luster asks N.Y. for help in Falls cleanup

By DAN HIGGINS
Journal Staff

ITHACA — Assemblyman Martin Luster, D-125th District, has asked the state's environmental commissioner to take action that could lead to the cleanup of Ithaca Falls.

In a letter dated Wednesday, Luster urged John Cahill, commissioner of the state Department of



Luster

Environmental Conservation, to ask the Environmental Protection Agency to investigate the site.

The EPA can perform emergency cleanups when the federal agency finds that a serious health threat exists. The Fall Creek site reportedly contains up to 10 tons of lead, comprising as much as 215,000 parts per million in soil tests.

'It seems to me people are reticent about how serious a situation this is. If the EPA undertakes immediate cleanup, that's a clear indication they think it's hazardous.'

— Assemblyman Martin Luster, D-125th District

According to state health regulations, lead could present a hazard when it exceeds 400 parts per million.

"It seems to me people are reticent about how serious a situation this is," Luster said in an interview Wednesday. "If the EPA undertakes immediate cleanup, that's a clear indication they think it's hazardous. If they decline, then maybe other options are available."

Walter Hang, president of Toxics Targeting Inc., an Ithaca company that maps toxic waste sites, thinks Luster's letter is a step in the right direction.

"This is a major benefit to efforts to clean up the lead contamination around Ithaca Falls," Hang said.

The EPA can only perform such an emergency cleanup upon the request of a state agency.

Where an immediate health hazard exists, the EPA would clean the site, and then seek reimbursement from parties responsible for the contamination.

The City of Ithaca purchased the 10-acre site from Cornell University in March for \$1.

The site is below the factory once used by the Ithaca Gun Co.