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Activist ties lead to Cayuga Lake

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ITHACA — The businessman and activist who drew attention to the lead-contaminated Fall Creek gorge area is now urging federal environmental officials to extend their cleanup efforts to include Cayuga Lake. Fall Creek is a major tributary of the lake.

Toxics Targeting president Walter Hang is asking the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency — which is preparing to clean up the gorge area near Ithaca Falls — to investigate lake sediments because Cornell University found lead in them four years ago during testing for its Lake Source Cooling Project. Cornell later removed about 7,000 cubic yards of metal-containing sediment from the lake bottom.

The university's 1996 testing

across from the project's East Shore Drive heat exchange facility, near East Shore Sailing, showed levels of lead and other metals that exceeded state Department of Environmental Conservation thresholds. This week, Hang criticized Cornell for not alerting the public to the lead presence.

But Cornell environmental engineer Bert Bland said the environmental impact statement itself was public information. He also pointed to the university's decision to remove the sediment near the lake's east shore after heavy metals were detected there.

"We took great care during the dredging to protect the environment and human health," Bland said.

This week, EPA officials and their consultants are testing lead levels between Ithaca Falls and

Hinchey seeks data on Ithaca Gun site

U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey, D-26th District, has requested a copy of a 1995 energy department survey of the former Ithaca Gun factory site, which made weapons for World War II and uranium rods in the 1960s.

The Energy Department has said investigations showed radioactivity on the site is no higher than background levels, but Hinchey said "experience has shown that closer scrutiny is often necessary."

the former Ithaca Gun factory, which has been blamed for the lead contamination, before beginning a cleanup.

Jeff Bechtel, the on-scene coordinator from the EPA, just heard Wednesday that lead had been found in the lake four years ago. He said he would have to talk to state DEC officials before determining whether his investigation would include an examination of the lake sediment.

The EPA has stepped in to clean up the gorge site at the DEC's request and will later seek reimbursement from as-yet undetermined parties. The land now under investigation is owned by the City of Ithaca, which bought it from Cornell University in March for \$1. The city knew the land was contaminated but planned to clean it up and turn it into a park with money from the state's brownfields program.