

## (September 13, 2007) Pit to stay empty years more

Pit to stay empty years more

(<http://www.dailysouthtown.com/news/556993,091407lucasberg.article>)

September 13, 2007

By Jim Hook, Staff writer

The Army Corps of Engineers has spent millions of dollars preparing the Lucas-Berg pit in Worth as a possible repository for dredgings from the nearby Calumet Sag Channel.

But in the 25 years since it opened, the Lucas-Berg pit has never received one granule of sand, silt or other sediment that packs the sides and bottom of the canal.

And that's how local residents want to keep things.

Residents who live near the 70-acre site near 111th Street and Oketo Avenue have banded together to fight the dumping of what they call "possible contaminants" into the pit.

They've enlisted the help of U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-3rd). Lipinski continues to work with residents, Worth Mayor Ed Guzdziol and others, and has asked the Army Corps of Engineers to seek alternate sites for its dredgings.

The Army Corps of Engineers dredges the Cal Sag periodically to maintain a 9-foot depth that allows the flow of barge traffic. Ron Fournier, a spokesman with the Corps, said there are no plans to use the Lucas-Berg pit for at least the next eight years.

Fournier said that before any dredging can be done, an environmental impact study must be completed to test the material taken out of the canal. And the \$500,000 to more than \$1 million needed to conduct such a study isn't available - and isn't likely to be available for years.

The Army Corps of Engineers leases the Lucas-Berg property from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District.

Fournier said the Corps dredges various waterways, including the Mississippi and Illinois rivers, and "removes and stockpiles silt and other sediment" that are then used by various businesses.

He said he did not know the end-products of all the dredged materials, but added that dirt was used for backfill and sand was used in sandboxes.

"It just depends on what we take out," Fournier said. "But it's all tested to make sure we know what we're taking is safe and free of contaminants."

Worth resident Adele Benck, who has been a vocal opponent to the pit being used as a dredging dump, said she wants the issue resolved now so that "future generations won't have to worry about it."

"We need economic development," Benck said. "That's what I'd like to see some of the property used for."

In the 1970s, local residents helped defeat a plan to turn the former quarry into a landfill. The village has recently expressed an interest in a portion of the site along 111th Street it wants to develop as a strip mall.

"We want to solve this problem, not put it on the shelf for future generations," Benck said.