

National Newspaper Week 2020

2020 HAS SHOWN US WHY AMERICA NEEDS JOURNALISTS

BY RANDY EVANS

There is one week set aside each year to salute newspapers for the important role they have played in our nation, a role that goes back to the beginning of these United States.

This year, however, waiting until Oct. 4-10 and National Newspaper Week has been difficult, because the coronavirus pandemic and a variety of major news events across our land have tested newspapers, and our communities, in ways we might never have fathomed.

Taking stock of the contributions by newspapers, large and small, serves as an important reminder of why our Founding Fathers wrote freedom of the press into the Constitution's Bill of Rights – and why the theme for this year's National Newspaper Week, "America Needs Journalists," is so appropriate.

We have seen our lives and our communities change in dramatic ways because of coronavirus.

In the early weeks, businesses closed their doors and government offices were darkened in response to directives that all but the most essential workers should remain at home to guard against spreading the disease.

Newspapers scrambled to protect their employees, too. But newspapers still needed to be produced to serve their readers and communities and to fulfill that vital information function the Founding Fathers envisioned.

Journalists quickly educated themselves on the coronavirus and shared that knowledge with readers. They kept their communities informed – telling readers where tests were available, reporting on local test results, sharing the heartbreaking news of deaths, and alerting people about employment changes at local businesses.

Journalists turned to their kitchen tables, spare bedrooms and basement offices to take the place of the newsrooms where they had gathered with colleagues a few weeks earlier. While the locations changed, the core mission of newspapers did not.

Newspapers have long served as



"watchdogs" over government. The pandemic magnified the significance of this role because the virus closed most government offices, and meetings of school boards, city councils and county officials moved onto Zoom.

Reporters have always tried to be vigilant over the way state and local governments use tax money and make decisions. But in 2020, journalists also have worked to keep up with the dynamic nature of the coronavirus testing data. They have tried to make sense of the metrics government leaders have relied upon in making decisions on mask wearing, social distancing, and back-to-school directives.

The most potent tool of newspapers continues to be the spotlight. They shine it on problems that need to be addressed and on solutions that ought to be considered. They shine it on stories that are heartwarming and uplifting. At other times, they shine it on topics that might raise the blood pressure of readers.

There has been a long tradition of newspapers advocating for the public's access to government meetings and records so citizens know what their government is doing, or not doing. This is hugely important now and long term, because government should conduct its business – really, it's the public's business – in open, not in secret, so citizens have the opportunity to share their views on forthcoming decisions.

The important work of newspapers stretches far beyond government buildings, however. Newspapers are there to introduce readers to interesting people. They tell their communities about events



that are coming up. They provide the stuff that finds its way into families' scrapbooks and onto the doors of refrigerators – news items about awards received, honors bestowed, touchdowns scored, prizewinning pigs shown at local fairs, and on and on.

And in times of great distress – during killer hurricanes and tornadoes, horrendous floods and wildfires – newspapers step up in ways that truly can make the difference between life and death. Newspapers have done that this year, once again being the go-to source for vital details the public needs – the lists of places where people can charge their cellphones, laptops and medical equipment, the loca-

tions of shelters and meal distribution sites, and places where people can get drinking water or provide a helping hand to those in need.

The immense challenges we all have dealt with this year clearly underscore the fact that America needs journalists.

Randy Evans is executive director of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council. He was a newspaper reporter and editor in Iowa for 42 years.

Editorial courtesy of National Newspaper Week 2020, <https://www.nationalnewspaperweek.com>.

Corps to hold virtual presentation Oct. 21

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including soils and building rubble and debris from the demolished structures on the NFSS. Subunit A is found in the central and south-south-west portions of the IWCS cell.

•Subunits B and C, found in the middle and northern sections of the IWCS, contain assorted rubble and debris associated with K-65 waste handling, demolished building structures, contaminated ore-processing residual materials, and lower-volume contaminated soils. The estimated total volume of both units is 249,632 cubic yards, yet the actual percentage of radioactivity is just 2%.

John Busse, who served as LOOW site project manager at the time, said the cleanup process would involve a complete encapsulation of the IWCS cell and the use of robotics to open it up and remove the subunit A materials.

Lower level wastes in subunits B and C at the IWCS would be handled using standard Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program protocols and equipment, similar to that used earlier at a Corps cleanup at a Linde facility in Tonawanda, Busse said.

No human contact would be involved within the encapsulated unit whatsoever, and the entire IWCS would have safeguards

to protect the community with regard to air monitoring and release.

At this writing, the project remains subject to federal government funding appropriations from Congress.

Returning to the Corps' article 3 balance of plan announcement, Arleen K. Kreusch, APR, outreach program specialist for the Corps Buffalo District, said, "Since then we've actively pursued the development of the remedial design contract to remediate the (NFSS) site. We expect to award this design contract in 2021 and our efforts have not been delayed or impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic."

She said the Corps has been proceeding over past months on the decision-making process for contamination located on the NFSS, but outside of the IWCS to arrive at what is referred to as alternative 3.

"Release of this proposed plan is a significant step forward. This plan proposes a remedy for addressing contaminated soils, buildings and building foundations, utilities, roads and roadbeds known as the balance of plant OU, and contaminated groundwater known as the Groundwater OU," Kreusch said.

She explained that, under the

Corps' preferred method, "Under alternative 3, impacted soil, road bedding and groundwater are removed; the foundation and utilities of former Building 401 are removed, and Building 433 and the foundations of former Buildings 430 and 431/432 are decontaminated by scarifying (mechanically grinding the surface) and left in place.

"FUSRAP-related material that is removed will be transported off-site for disposal at an appropriately permitted disposal facility. Following implementation of alternative 3, the site would be

remediated to levels suitable for industrial use (i.e., protective of both construction and industrial workers). Five-year reviews will be conducted to ensure continued protectiveness of the remedy."

The Corps public comment period began Oct. 5 and continues to Dec. 5. In the meantime, the Corps will hold a virtual public hearing at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 21, to present the plan to the public. Due to space limitations, those interested in participating are requested to register with the Corps by Oct. 19 via email at fusrap@usace.army.mil.

The proposed plan is available for review at <https://www.lrb.usace.army.mil/Missions/HTRW/FUSRAP/Niagara-Falls-Storage-Site/>. The Corps is now accepting public comments on the plan.

For further information, respond to the Corps via the above email or call 800-833-6390.



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WED 6AM-8PM - Chicken Cutlet, Hot Turkey Sandwich or Haddock
THURS 6AM-8PM - Swedish Meatballs over Egg Noodles or Haddock
FRI 6AM-2PM - Haddock, Fish Sandwiches, Tuna Melts & New England Clam Chowder
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