



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## Lakefront nature park planned

88-acre project awaits pollution tests

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Cleveland officials unveiled a \$4.6 million plan Monday to create a nature preserve with bicycle paths and hiking trails on Dike 14, an 88-acre Lake Erie peninsula built with sludge.

But before the project can begin, officials must pull together at least \$200,000 to test the ground to see whether the fill -- polluted sediment dredged from the Cleveland Harbor and the Cuyahoga River -- is too contaminated for public exposure.

The Army Corps of Engineers started the dike in 1979 and dumped chemical-containing sludge into it for 20 years.

"We feel so unsure about guaranteeing the safety of the public because we don't know what's there," said Kathy Poole, a landscape architect from a Baltimore firm that was paid \$57,000 to produce the plan. "If we find contaminants on the site, (the cost) could quadruple."

The dike, north of Martin Luther King Boulevard, has become overgrown and filled with wildlife, including an array of bird species. It is on the National Audubon Society's list of bird areas.

The plan is to create a six-acre wetland on the site and designate certain areas for hiking, bicycling and picnicking. No cars will be allowed. "We're trying to teach people to live with the environment," said Poole.

The plan also calls for building an observation deck and a giant land mound for viewing the wetlands, the lake and the city skyline. The project, excluding any environmental cleanup, would take about a year and a half to complete.

Because of the environmental hurdles, no schedule has been established.

The dike, accessible from the Gordon Park boat-launching area, is controlled by the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority, which is turning it over to the city.

City officials are working with state, county and federal officials and private and nonprofit groups to secure funding. Cuyahoga County committed \$25,000 this year for environmental testing.

The project is backed by a coalition of environmental and nature education organizations, including the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and the Cleveland Metroparks.

"Getting a plan on paper will help us move forward," said Debbie Berry, manager of the city's lakefront program, which is focused on creating public access to the city's shoreline.

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