

Environmental cleanup at AltEn shows progress, Nebraska agency says

[Chris Dunker](#), January 4, 2022



Work to stabilize the troubled AltEn plant for the winter is ongoing as the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy continues its review of a plan for cleaning up the biofuel operation that turned pesticide-treated seed into ethanol.

The [state completed its review of the 111-page plan](#) before Christmas and returned it with comments to the AltEn Facility Response Group, a coalition of six seed industry giants that have taken responsibility for cleaning up the facility near Mead.

The public will get a chance to weigh in on the plan, but it's unclear when. A public hearing date has not been set.

Meanwhile, work to prepare the site for the cold and snowy conditions of a Nebraska winter is continuing, the Department of Environment and Energy said in a Dec. 28 [video posted to its YouTube channel](#).

“Our staff are on site at least three times a week monitoring conditions and site activities,” Department of Environment and Energy Director Jim Macy said in the video.

Under the direction of NewFields, an environmental engineering and construction firm with its headquarters in Georgia, solids from an emergency lagoon have been removed and its synthetic liner has been repaired.

The emergency lagoon will be used to contain pesticide-laden thin stillage — a liquid byproduct of ethanol manufacturing — as well as manure and stormwater from the twin digester tanks.

One of the two tanks burst during the February 2021 cold snap, releasing an estimated 4 million gallons of pesticide-contaminated slurry downstream, prompting emergency action from the state.

Tom Buell, division administrator for monitoring and remediation, said the relined emergency lagoon will ensure the liquids drained from the digesters are safely contained for the winter months, and will be closely watched to ensure it doesn't exceed capacity.

The solids from the emergency lagoon were added to the wet cake pile on the northwest corner of the property, Buell said, where material from three separate wet cake piles was consolidated.

Over the next several weeks, work will be done to cover the wet cake pile with Posi-Shell, a mineral mortar similar to stucco made by LSC Environmental Products — material NewFields said could protect the pile until its disposal is complete.

For more information about AltEn site activities: <http://dee.ne.gov/Press.nsf/pages/AltEn>