



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Baltimore District

# The Corps' pondent

a newsletter by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the residents of Spring Valley

August 2001

## Rights of entry needed to complete area-wide soil sampling

by Maj. Michael Peloquin  
Spring Valley Operations Officer

Field teams are nearly finished collecting soil samples for arsenic from properties where we have a signed right of entry, or ROE. As of Aug. 14, we have received 800 of the 1,200 ROEs needed from residential property owners.

For the past few weeks, we have been conducting a direct call and door-to-door campaign to get the additional ROEs. If you are a property owner and want to have your property sampled, but have not completed the ROE form, I encourage you to send us a signed ROE as soon as possible.

To obtain a copy of the ROE form, call the information line at 1-800-434-0988 or Melissa Jones, Corps of Engineers Real Estate Office, at 410-962-5166. You can also download a copy from the Spring Valley Internet website at: <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm>.

In the past few days, all Spring Valley residents should have received a copy of the revised ROE with a letter of explanation. If you have already submitted a previous version of the ROE, no further action is required on your part. The provisions in this revised ROE protect all property owners who signed a previous

version of the document. The Restoration Advisory Board reviewed the revised ROE and approved the added provisions.

### Sampling results

Sampling results have been mailed to residents who had their properties sampled for arsenic between May 31 and June 15. To date, we have received validated test results for approximately 150 properties.

Fifteen percent of these properties will require follow-on grid sampling for arsenic. Due to the preparation for the congressional testimony July 27, we are slightly behind schedule in returning validated test results to those residents whose properties have been sampled. We are working as fast as possible to get sampling results out to property owners. We anticipate we will be back on schedule by the end of this month.

### Glenbrook Road

On July 19, we stopped the hand excavation of a burial pit that straddles two properties, 4825 and 4801 Glenbrook Road,



A crane topples over onto the partially completed metal structure.

until a special metal structure could be installed over the pit as an added safety measure.

Although the canvas containment tent, used since the start of the pit excavation in May, is capable of safely filtering chemical agents that might exist at the site, the metal structure will provide an added level of safety. This pre-fabricated metal structure is certified to prevent the release of chemical agent in the event of an accidental detonation of an ordnance item.

A similar structure was used during the Corps' investigation of two burial pits at 4801 Glenbrook between March 1999 and March 2000.

(continued on p. 2)

## Crane accident

While installing the metal structure Aug. 10, a small crane tipped over and damaged a finished portion of the structure. One worker received minor injuries to his arm. He was taken to Sibley Hospital for treatment and released.

Following the accident, the Corps ordered a safety stand-down to review onsite procedures. At no time during the incident were workers or residents at risk from items buried in the pit.

The Corps continues its standard practice of monitoring air at the site. Workers resumed installation of the structure the week of Aug. 20. Hand excavation of the pit is scheduled to resume Aug. 27, once the structure has been installed and tested.

Prior to the work stoppage, 10 75-mm rounds, 40 glass bottles, one crushed five-gallon metal can and other broken glassware

were safely removed, containerized and transported offsite to be tested. None of the ordnance items were configured for detonation or contained chemical agent.

To date, 12 bottles have been tested—five showed the presence of a lewisite derivative and two showed mustard agent. The Corps is awaiting test results on the remaining bottles.

## Other activities

Restoration activities continue at 4801 Glenbrook Road, as well as in a stream in the area adjacent to this property.

The Corps has received final validated sample results for the contaminants other than arsenic at the American University child development center.

These results are still being analyzed, but the assessment to date indicates there are no other major contaminants of concern. Soil removal at the child devel-

opment center for arsenic began Aug. 9. This work involves removing the top two feet of soil and replacing it with new soil, and will take several weeks to complete.

Elsewhere, the Corps expedited follow-up grid sampling at three properties in the vicinity of the old trench system on Sedgwick Street.

Testing of properties in this same area for contaminants, other than arsenic, also was performed. While the interpretation of the results will take many weeks, the initial review of the results by the Corps and D.C. Health Department did not identify any contaminants of concern other than arsenic.

Also, two anomalies at two properties in this area will be investigated further, following approval from the Army's safety office. This work could begin in mid-October.

## Corps responds to Aug. 15 Northwest Current article

by Maj. Michael Peloquin  
Spring Valley Operations Officer

It is very important for community members to attend public meetings to a) remain informed of the project's progress, b) learn more about the science and logic behind the Corps' efforts, c) provide input into the cleanup efforts, and d) witness the dialogue and concerns for themselves. With regard to the latter, leaving the reporting of events to others can often be misleading.

In the Aug. 15 *Northwest Current*, certain statements are inaccurate or false. In the Corps' efforts to remain up front with the community during this challenging cleanup process, we believe it is necessary to present the Corps' understanding of these points.

First, at the July RAB meeting, the community RAB members did discuss and decide to make a formal request to the Army for all

information related to Spring Valley. The RAB intends to ask for all Spring Valley-related e-mail among the Corps, the EPA and D.C. Health (the *Northwest Current* article only referred to Corps-internal e-mail). The RAB has not yet formally submitted this request, but plans to do so by the end of August.

Upon receipt of the request, U.S. Army officials will review the entire letter and formally respond as deemed appropriate. During the RAB discussion, I acknowledged that I would certainly fulfill this e-mail request if directed to do so as part of the Army's response to the RAB's formal request. At this point in the discussion, I then provided my informal opinion on the e-mail request issue, which was inadequately presented in *The Northwest Current's* article.

As I explained to the RAB mem-

bers in the meeting, I believe fulfilling this request for the Corps' portion of the existing e-mail will greatly detract from the ongoing efforts to conduct sampling, complete excavations, explore UXO technology, maintain the RAB and a host of other project tasks.

The RAB has previously made it clear that it does not want its activities to detract from the ongoing investigation.

At the July RAB meeting, members specifically asked if certain information requests would impact current work. I thought it prudent, therefore, to alert them to the fact that any request for e-mail records would significantly impact my ability to manage the Corps' ongoing operations in Spring Valley. I do not have the manpower nor funding to compile and organize several years of e-mail, and do not believe it is a

(continued on p. 4)

## Restoration Advisory Board meeting review

by Ted Henry  
Public Affairs Office

The Spring Valley RAB held its fourth meeting Aug. 14 at St. David's Episcopal Church. Discussions revolved around the ongoing area-wide arsenic sampling and the lack of returned rights-of-entry, detection technology for unexploded ordnance, or UXO, and next steps in the sampling and assessment process.

The RAB also brought several existing tasks to completion, approving the finalization of their operating procedures, the new right-of-entry form and the initial test results letters.

RAB members discussed the 400-plus properties for which the owners have not returned ROEs and the importance of sampling as many properties as possible.

Within a few weeks all properties with returned ROEs will be completed. Phone calls and door-to-door efforts are under way to obtain the outstanding ROEs and community RAB members offered to work with the Corps in this effort.

The RAB also discussed the possibility of unexploded ordnance remaining in the community.

Currently, the Corps is planning a "prove-out" of other UXO detection technology that may be useful in future Spring Valley investigations.

Community RAB members expressed specific

interest in working with the Corps in determining what areas may receive additional UXO investigation. The October RAB will focus on UXO issues and concerns.

The RAB members began preliminary discussions on remedial options for properties with elevated arsenic. The goal is to expedite the process while retaining the community review process and protective provision for property owners.

To this end, the Corps is considering an area-wide, presumptive feasibility study and remediation plan to identify the best approach or approaches for addressing elevated arsenic on individual properties.

It would include a 30-day public comment period and the RAB will be included in its development. Additionally, each owner of property needing remediation will have his or her own comment period to tailor the recommended remediation plan before it is implemented at the property.

There was discussion about the arsenic and health presentation given by Dr. Steven Lamm at the Aug. 7 community meeting. Various perspectives on arsenic toxicity and cleanup criteria were raised.

Maj. Peloquin informed RAB members that Dr. Lamm is drafting a summary of the presentation that the Corps will make available to community members. Additionally, transcripts from the meeting will be available soon on the Spring Valley website.

In the ongoing effort of the

Corps to improve the availability of information, the RAB received copies of the Operable Unit 5 Sampling Work Plan for review.

Property maps with associated ground scars from historic aerial photos will be placed on the web within the month. This type of information should provide community members with a better understanding of how the sampling efforts were designed.

With regard to the information repository, the Corps continues its efforts to find a more accessible location for Spring Valley documents. Efforts to place the repository at American University did not work out, but using the Spring Valley Resident Office remains a viable option.

If this location is selected, the office would be open on certain evenings to accommodate interested residents who work during the day.

The next RAB meeting will be held on **Sept. 11 at St. David's Episcopal Church, 5150 Macomb Street, NW, Washington, D.C.**

To review the minutes and learn more about the other topics discussed at the August RAB or to contact the RAB, please visit the Spring Valley website at:

[http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/Washington DC/springvalley.htm](http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/Washington%20DC/springvalley.htm). Or you can

access the site at the District's first page at:

<http://www.nab.usace.army.mil>.

Once, there, just click on the Spring Valley button.



Department of the Army  
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
 Baltimore District  
 P.O. Box 1715  
 Baltimore, MD 21203-1715

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## Corps responds to Northwest Current — (continued from p. 2)

prudent expenditure of time and money to carry out such a request.

As for the paper's reference to Ms. Shapley's statement on e-mail as "documents of record," the text reverses the point actually made.

Her comments regarded whether all e-mail traffic would need to be provided by the Army in response to the "full disclosure demand" by the RAB's community members.

She wanted to clarify that, in her view, the principal interest would be served by only including e-mails that were, in effect, "documents of record." She described these as ones that reflected a decision or discussion that before the use of e-mail would have been communicated by letter or memorandum.

I respectfully acknowledge Ms. Shapley's point and commend her and other RAB members for the time they volunteer to the Spring Valley project. Nonetheless, as I pointed out at the meeting, to

review, for example, the several gigabytes of e-mail left by my predecessor, Maj. Brian Plaisted, to find such documents of record would be extremely time-consuming.

After finding such documents, I would then have to ensure proprietary and privacy regulations are not broken by the requested public distribution. All told, this would be a daunting, expensive task, and the Spring Valley project would come to a screeching halt.

With regard to the RAB's discussion on the public repository, we did follow-up on the request of several RAB members and other folks to move the Spring Valley documents from the Palisades Public Library to American University.

While the *Northwest Current* did report that AU declined our request, it did not report that the Corps has been and continues to work toward updating the repository at its current location while establishing a better location.

As for Dr. Steven Lamm's presentation that was also referenced in the *Northwest Current's* article, we believe many residents who attended the Aug. 7 meeting were relieved to hear what health effects arsenic contamination is and is not associated with. Equally important, Dr. Lamm presented his views on the concentrations associated with these health links that have been documented.

Many people within and outside the scientific arena have differing beliefs regarding acceptable or protective exposures and concentrations. The Corps hired Dr. Lamm as an outside arsenic expert to educate the community on what he knows about arsenic. While he is a nationally recognized expert, he is not the only expert. The Corps is open to suggestions on other sources of information that we can bring to the community in the future.

### *The Corps'pondent*

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**Baltimore Commander & District Engineer** ..... Col. Charles J. Fiala, Jr.  
**Deputy District Engineer, Spring Valley** ..... Maj. Michael Peloquin  
**Public Affairs Chief** ..... Lucy Lather  
**Public Affairs Specialist** ..... Doug Garman