



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

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## Spring Valley team resumes Lot 18 dig

by Mary Beth Thompson  
Public Affairs Office

Workers in Level B protective gear restarted digging June 24 on an American University parcel called Lot 18.

The types of items that had been recovered as of press time include labware, glass and ceramic fragments, ordnance scrap, construction debris, and beverage and condiment bottles. An intact tin can and a potentially filled 75 mm round have been removed, analyzed and cleared.

As the workers dig, hundreds of drums have been filled with soil and mud. Soil samples have been tested, and no chemical warfare agent has been detected to date.

"So far, we're finding what we expected to discover at this

site," said Gary Schilling, Spring Valley program manager. "The items we're uncovering are consistent with the site history."

Schilling said that the team is using extensive safety precautions because a small quantity of lewisite was found among the items recovered from Lot 18 last year. That discovery has turned what was a low-probability dig into a high-probability dig.

Lewisite is a liquid developed as a chemical weapon for war use that was part of the work of the World War I American University Experiment Station.

Changing from a low-probability of finding chemical warfare material to a high probability meant a new work plan had to be written for the Lot 18 dig, additional safeguards put in place and a higher level of con-

cern for public safety attended to, said project manager Craig Georg.

"The safety of our workers and the community is our first priority," Schilling said.

Safety precautions include air filters to trap and eliminate chemical agent and several types of air monitors that provide a redundant system. Alarms are designed to ring when chemical agent is detected.

Workers dig inside an engineer control structure—a large, sealed, negatively pressurized tent. The negative pressure makes it difficult for any chemical agent in the air to leave the structure, Georg explained. In the adjoining operations center, the work inside the tent is monitored on closed circuit TV.

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Workers at Lot 18 are wearing Level B protective gear like that shown in this photo.

*U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photos*



This laboratory funnel was recovered at Lot 18.



These glass items are typical of many domestic items that have been found at Lot 18.

## Lot 18 resumes *continued from p.1*

"As an extra safety measure, the nearby neighborhood residents and occupants of American University buildings have been taught Shelter-in-Place," Schilling said. "Shelter-in-Place is designed to minimize their exposure to an accidental release." Sirens and an emergency ring-down system that calls and emails recipients would notify of the need to Shelter-in-Place.

The dig team includes many experts. Parsons, an experienced contractor, is conducting the work. The U.S. Army Technical Escort Unit is on site to assess, neutralize and dispose of hazardous material that is recovered. The Edgewood Chemical and Biological Center is responsible for air monitoring. The Engineer-

ing and Support Center, Huntsville, is providing safety oversight.

The Spring Valley team spent months preparing for the dig, developing plans with the experts and discussing them with project partners, property owners and the community. The team notified local emergency responders, elected officials, the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department of the dig. Homeland Security has offices nearby, and there are embassies and ambassadors' homes in the neighborhood.

The week before the dig began, the Corps offered Lot 18 site tours to officials from the EPA, D.C. Health Department and American University; elected officials; community members; American University staff and students; and

the media.

The team does not expect to uncover an explosively configured chemical round, but the possibility of finding lewisite again is there, Georg said. But with the protections that are being used, the team believes the likelihood of a chemical release that would affect the neighborhood is very isolated.

"It would be a very remote possibility for all the precautions to have failed," Georg said. "There are three things that would have to happen at the same time—the tent has a breach, the engineering controls fail, and we actually have a bottle of lewisite that's fallen and broken and spilled."

A probability study assessed the chance of that happening at one in 50 million.

## Army provides additional federal funds to Spring Valley

*by Gary Schilling  
Spring Valley Program Manager*

Officials with the Department of the Army recently approved \$1.23 million in additional Fiscal Year 2004 federal funds to support the Corps of Engineers' investigation and cleanup of the Spring Valley Formerly Used Defense Site.

The additional funds will be applied to removal of arsenic-contaminated soil and to the groundwater investigation.

Over the past few months, the Spring Valley project delivery team has identified sizeable increases in scope and costs that significantly raise the cost of the cleanup. These include higher expenditures for soil removal, the re-charac-

terization of Lot 18 as a Recovered Chemical Warfare Materiel site, additional required geophysical surveys, increased costs related to security, and other new and unfunded project requirements.

The known work will extend the investigation and cleanup at Spring Valley until 2010 at the present funding level of \$11 million per year.

The higher costs were affecting the project's 2004 budget, effectively reducing the amount of work that could be accomplished from this year's approved work plan. The project team briefed Department of the Army officials on the impact of the greater scope and cost over the life of the project and sought additional support for this fiscal year. The Army promised the

project an additional \$1.23 million, bringing the project's Fiscal Year 2004 budget to just over \$12 million.

### Concerns about your health?

The D.C. Department of Health has a medical surveillance system to identify and monitor arsenic-related illnesses among Spring Valley residents.

Residents who have concerns about exposure to arsenic are asked to contact Matthew Jones, Medical Affairs Office, **202-671-0733**. Dr. Walter Faggett, D.C. Health's interim chief medical officer, oversees the system.

# May, June RAB summaries

by Danielle Stern  
Community Outreach Team

**May**—The Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board met May 11.

Gary Schilling, the Corps' Spring Valley program manager and RAB co-chair, announced that the Lot 18 excavation had been delayed until late June. Property owners directly affected had been notified immediately of the change.

Schilling also said that the team had begun reviewing comments received on the Lot 18 work plan, or Annex F. The main issue raised by the public and the regulators was the level of noise that the air-filtration system might produce. In response, the Corps promised to turn off the generators during non-working hours. Work will be done four days a week, further reducing the days when noise would be a concern. Project personnel will monitor the noise levels and work with the community to take additional steps if necessary.

Other comments received were on: waste transportation; air monitoring for other than chemical warfare materiel; the definition of an intact container; response to fire within the structure; sampling soil and debris; monitoring for dust; ground penetrating radar; and public notification in an emergency. Corps officials said these comments would be addressed.

Schilling announced the formation of a Spring Valley Public Affairs Work Group, comprising public affairs representatives from the D.C. Health Department, the Environmental Protection Agency, American University and the Corps.

In other project updates,

Schilling discussed the Phytoremediation Study, a test of whether certain ferns can absorb arsenic from the soil. Ferns are being planted on selected properties to test their effectiveness. The Corps is studying whether phytoremediation could be a viable alternative to excavating arsenic contaminated soil in Spring Valley.

Two members of the Area of Interest Task Force provided an update on their research. This was followed by an update on community outreach. One item discussed was low community attendance at recent meetings.

A dialogue on ways to improve the website followed. The Corps said it is looking into ways to make the website more user friendly, while keeping budget constraints in mind.

In RAB news, members discussed new procedures and the election of new members. They voted on a nominating committee and reviewed the applications for three open RAB positions.

**June**—The RAB met June 8 and heard a number of project updates along with information on the Lot 18 investigation.

The RAB also discussed administrative issues, including the program's budget and timeline.

The Corps presented the Anomaly Review Board's, or ARB, decisions for investigating the Lot 18 area, which included the geophysical data collected. The ARB includes representatives from the Corps' Baltimore District and Huntsville Engineering and Support Center, the EPA and the D.C. Health Department.

The Corps presented the plan for mitigating noise during the Lot 18 investigation. A silencer on the exhaust and curtains around the generators will be

used to lower the noise level to below 60 decibels, in addition to the steps announced last month. Schilling expressed the Corps team's understanding of the importance of the issue and their desire to make the community as comfortable as possible with the level of sound that will be generated during this necessary dig.

In other project news, the Corps reported that 2,500 brake ferns were planted in three locations as part of the Phytoremediation Study. After harvesting and evaluation in the fall, the partners will decide whether phytoremediation presents a viable option to removing soil with high arsenic levels.

Residential soil removals are progressing. The Corps has worked closely with the homeowners and neighbors of the first property, as well as the neighboring properties. The Corps reported that construction debris found under the topsoil at the first property was likely left from when the home was built.

In RAB news, the nomination committee announced that they received three applications that fulfilled the requirements for membership. The RAB voted unanimously to elect the three as new members.

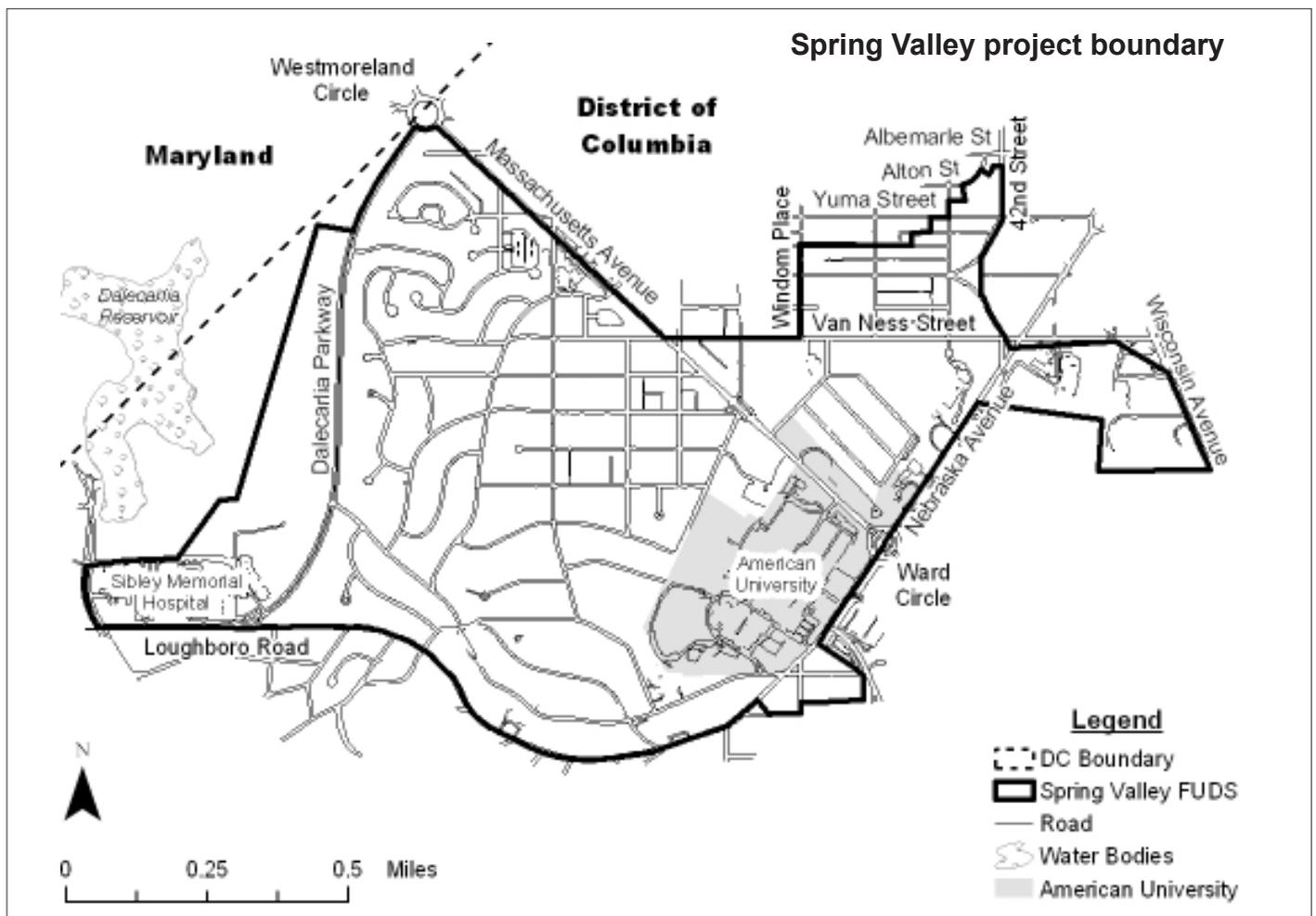
A revised Evergreen List, which is used as a "parking lot" for areas or incidents brought to the Corps by the community or regulators, was presented. RAB members were asked to review this list before the next meeting.

RAB meeting minutes are on the Spring Valley website: <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm>. The next RAB meeting will be Aug. 10 at St. David's Episcopal Church, 7pm to 9:30pm.



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Official Business



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