

**ORAL STATEMENT**

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
JOINT PUBLIC HEARING**

**The Committee on Public Works and the Environment  
Carol Schwartz, Chair  
and  
The Committee on Human Services  
Sandy Allen, Chair**

**JULY 14, 2003**

**COLONEL CHARLES J. FIALA, JR.  
COMMANDER  
BALTIMORE DISTRICT, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF  
ENGINEERS**

Good morning Councilmember Schwartz and Councilmember Allen. I am Colonel Charles J. Fiala, Jr., Commander of the Baltimore District of the US Army Corps of Engineers. Thank you for your invitation to testify before this committee and for agreeing to reschedule it so that I could speak. In June of last year, I testified about our past work at the Spring Valley Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS) to members of the US Congress. Today I would like to discuss our progress at this site since then.

In the past year, we have made significant progress on the Spring Valley project. Our project team has been extremely busy ascertaining the scope of Department of Defense (DOD) contamination at the site and removing any hazardous materials found. We continue to work with our project partners – the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the District of Columbia Department of Health – in an open and professional working relationship. Also, we continue to actively solicit community input on key project decisions and have increased the opportunities for the community to be involved in the project process.

Field work in the last year has greatly reduced uncertainties about the extent and location of arsenic contamination at the site. We have nearly completed the site-wide soil sampling effort that was developed by the project partners in the spring of 2001. To date, we have sampled 96% of the roughly 1,500 residential and commercial properties at the site and continue to seek permission for access to the remaining unsampled properties.

The sampling results enabled us to identify the residential properties with the highest levels of arsenic contamination, and we have successfully completed soil removals at those properties along with several adjacent properties for a total of 22 properties. We have received letters of praise from several of these homeowners. Their letters comment on the professionalism of the field crews and the high level of care used while working in the resident's yards. We expect to conduct soil removals at approximately 120 additional residential properties throughout the course of the next several years. The level of arsenic contamination in the soils at these properties is low enough to allow for this longer time frame.

Within the last year, we have also removed several thousand tons of arsenic-contaminated soil from the American University grounds and intramural fields. We expect this effort to be completed later this summer.

Besides arsenic, the extensive sampling effort has not identified any other chemicals of concern at the site. We have sampled for other chemical warfare materials and breakdown products both on the surface and below the surface at many locations. At several residential locations we screened the samples for as many of the chemicals used at the former experiment station as possible. This complex screening effort reaffirmed that arsenic is the only contaminant of concern at Spring Valley.

Unfortunately, the analysis of these samples, and our efforts to package the results into a comprehensive but understandable document took too long. This caused some confusion and misunderstanding in the community. We are now even more sensitive to the need for the timely release of any and all testing results and will ensure that a similar problem does not recur.

The Corps has reduced hazards associated with buried ordnance and chemical warfare material at the site by investigating suspect areas, removing suspect materials, and disposing of previously discovered materials. Last summer, we performed a thorough investigation at two properties on Sedgwick Street which are located in an area once containing training trenches. The only ordnance-related items we found were several pieces of harmless shell fragments. Since this spring, we have performed a focused investigation at the Spaulding and Captain Rankin areas near Woodway Lane and American University grounds. Out of several hundred subsurface anomalies investigated there, we recovered several ordnance-related fragments and removed them from the property. Also this spring, we safely destroyed and neutralized all the chemical warfare and conventional ordnance items that had been recovered in recent years and stored in our local holding facility.

Within the Spring Valley neighborhood, we have started geophysical investigative work at a dozen properties selected jointly by the project partners and based on a variety of factors that indicate a higher possibility of finding ordnance there. The investigative efforts at these properties are scheduled for early next year. Similar investigative efforts will continue at other properties in the neighborhood for as long as needed.

I am confident the Corps, the USEPA, and the District of Columbia Department of Health will continue to forge an effective working relationship. Although professional opinions often differ among members of the group, we are able to channel the positive benefits of the healthy debate toward genuine progress on management, technical and community issues. Within the past year, the partners have formed a joint investigative team and are using a site evaluation scheme to identify and prioritize areas for ordnance investigation. The joint team is conducting an ongoing records search in order to find and integrate new information into the project efforts. As new areas of concern are integrated into the project, they will be prioritized by relative health risk level.

In conclusion, we have worked very hard during the past year to reduce uncertainties associated with the Spring Valley site by defining the extent of DOD contamination and by solidifying the partnership's collaboration. To succeed at this challenging site, we will continue our strong partnership with the EPA and the District's Department of Health, and will continue to seek full and open consultation

with the community. As always, we remain committed to aggressively responding to risks associated with former DOD activities at the Spring Valley site.

I would like to thank this committee for the opportunity to speak and I am prepared to answer your questions regarding the Corps' efforts at this site.