



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

March/April 2003

Corps safely destroys munitions, more possible for May

by Gary Schilling
Lead Project Manager, Spring Valley

Last month, the Corps of Engineers safely destroyed over 73 World War I conventional munitions found during its investigation and cleanup of the Spring Valley site. The munitions were destroyed onsite at the Spring Valley field office using the T-10 Controlled Detonation Chamber.

Corps officials point out that safely destroying these items onsite significantly reduced the risks associated with handling and transporting the items to an offsite area.

Prior to beginning the detonations March 7, the Corps explained the detonation process during onsite tours to local media and members of the Restoration Advisory Board and Sibley Hospital.

Treating chemical munitions

The Corps is coordinating with project partners to conduct similar activities in an effort to address those munitions that potentially contain chemical warfare materiel.

At this point, the Corps is planning to use a treatment system, known as the Explosive Destruction System or EDS, to safely treat any suspect chemicals in the munitions.

Similar to the Controlled Detonation Chamber, the EDS is mounted on the bed of a tractor-

trailer truck and contains special components that are used to safely treat chemical munitions. The EDS has been used at a number of sites nationwide, but this would be the first time the EDS has been used at Spring Valley. The Department of Defense Explosives Safety Board approves the use of the EDS at each site.

As an added measure of safety during the use of the EDS, the Army will erect a metal vapor containment structure over the EDS. This structure is similar to the one used during the excavation of the burial pits on Glenbrook Road. Both the EDS and vapor containment structure contain independent filtering systems designed to prevent the release of a chemical agent should an unplanned release occur during the handling of these items.

The EDS was presented to the Restoration Advisory Board at the April 8 meeting. If the EDS is used, the system would be set up and operational by mid-May.

Other project activities

In other activities, 18 residential properties with the highest arsenic concentrations have been completed to date. More properties will be addressed this fiscal year.

At the American University campus, workers plan to remove

the remaining grids of arsenic soil from the intramural fields and Child Development Center. This work should be completed by early summer.

The excavation of a burial pit containing general building and household-type trash and debris found last year on a small strip of the AU campus directly behind several properties on Rockwood Parkway has been temporarily halted until next fiscal year.

Resources from this work will be used to support the previously scheduled excavation of anomalies in what is known historically as the Spaulding/Captain Rankin Area. This comprises a small strip of land on American University and several properties on Woodway Lane. In this work area, specialists will intrusively investigate the anomalies and identify what they might be.

Geophysical investigations

The effort to investigate other properties for any additional burial pits or trenches is under way.

To date, geophysical surveys have been completed on four residential properties with several more planned this fiscal year. Survey results will be available in several weeks. Project partners are discussing other groups of residential properties that may need to be investigated.

March 2003 RAB meeting

The Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board met March 11 at St. David's Episcopal Church. The meeting began with the Corps, EPA and DC Health presenting awards to Sarah Shapley, the outgoing Community Co-chair, who served from July 2001 to December 2002.

Project Manager Gary Shilling continued the meeting by explaining what sampling took place in 2001, which was the topic of a recent debate at the last RAB meeting and a story in a recent *Northwest Current* article.

Schilling stated that soil samples were collected from American University's Child Development Center, four properties in the 5000 block of Sedgwick Street, and four OU-4 properties closer to AU. Soil samples from these locations had been analyzed for a broad suite of target compounds selected by the agency partners and commonly referred to as the AUES List, which is a comprehensive list of chemicals used at the Army's American University Experiment Station.

While the data from the CDC and Sedgwick properties were shared with the property owners and occupants, the sampling effort has been of concern for the RAB and four property owners because the data from the four OU-4 properties had not been distributed to the respective residents until recently.

Schilling said that the data had been reviewed in 2001 and that no detections of concern were identified. He reiterated that all three participating agencies agreed that arsenic remains the only chemical contaminant of concern in the cleanup.

Schilling did acknowledge that the Corps should have notified the residents of the four properties that the data had been reviewed, that no concerns were identified and that the data would be released to the public through the Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis report (currently due out for public comment this May).

He explained that there had been many higher priorities addressed during this timeframe in 2001 and 2002, such as the area-wide arsenic sampling, time critical removals and the excavation of the munitions pit at 4825 Glenbrook Road. Thus, providing the data to the four property owners was placed on a slower track because of the negligible risk, but resulted in the current misunderstanding.

Tom Bachovchin, Parsons Engineering Science, Inc., next discussed the sample analysis procedures used during the AUES list sampling, including quality assurance/quality control issues raised by the RAB's technical advisor the previous month.

Out of the 176 compounds on the AUES list, 135 compounds could be analyzed directly or by looking for indicator compounds. He explained that minor analytical problems, as defined by EPA protocols, were encountered.

He said that all the data collected were deemed useable for assessing risks.

Drew Rak of EPA then presented an evaluation of risk based on the sampling results. He discussed chemicals detected above risk based concentrations, or RBCs, chemicals that do not have RBCs, detection limits, volatile organic compounds and

laboratory contaminants.

RBCs are developed by EPA Region 3 and are used to screen detected compounds to determine if additional investigation is warranted.

Of the 13 AUES List compounds detected, five compounds were below their respective RBCs and, in turn, did not require additional consideration. Three other compounds, namely aluminum, iron and magnesium, were found at concentrations above RBCs or background, but not at concentrations requiring action. Five remaining AUES List compounds of the 13 detected do not have RBCs. These compounds were sulfur, silicon, phosphorus, oleic acid and benzyl bromide and are not considered significant due to their presence in the environment naturally, being essential nutrients and/or and because they were detected at very low concentrations.

One RAB member expressed concerns about vapor intrusion into homes. Rak pointed out that all volatile organic compounds from that AUES List detected have RBCs and that none of these comparison criteria were exceeded.

Steve Hirsh, EPA remedial project manager, and Dawn Ioven, EPA toxicologist, added that they did not see any risk associated with the data, but did note that some of the data might lead to additional investigative work. Hirsh also indicated that the EPA was having an independent lab re-evaluate the data to verify the quality of the data.

Another concern expressed by a RAB member was the

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April 2003 RAB meeting

The Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board met April 8 at St. David's Episcopal Church.

In addition to most of the board members, approximately a dozen residents were in attendance.

The topics covered were the Controlled Detonation Chamber, the Explosive Destruction System (EDS), the progress of the partnership's multi-stakeholder task group, the status of soil sampling outside the existing project boundary, and an update on efforts to retrieve historical records from Fort Leonard Wood, Kan.

Project manager and RAB Co-Chair Gary Schilling reported that the use of the T-10 Controlled Detonation Chamber to destroy all conventional ordnance items recovered from Spring Valley to date was a success.

All such items were processed in the chamber and none remain at the federal holding facility. The chamber itself is still at the federal property, but will be leaving soon to go back to the Massachusetts Military Reservation to resume operations there.

Explosive Destruction System

Next, representatives from the Army's non-stockpile munitions program gave a slide presentation and answered questions on the mobile EDS that will be used at the federal property to treat and neutralize recovered chemical ordnance items.

During the question and answer period, the board asked the representatives from the EPA and D.C. Department of Health if they had any concerns or reservations about using the system.

Both agency representatives replied that they have no concerns about the technical merits of the system and when considering the relative safety and practicality of moving the items elsewhere, use of the EDS is the safest and quickest choice.

Two members of D.C. Metropolitan Police Bomb Squad were present at the meeting and one of the officers indicated he was extremely comfortable with EDS and the onsite plans.

Following this presentation, Terry Slonecker, one of EPA's experts on historical photographic analysis, reported on work being done by the agency partnership's Area of Investigation Task Force.

Slonecker is the EPA member on this multi-stakeholder group. Their mission is to thoroughly assess old and more recent information regarding historical activity sites and to make recommendations which areas merit further investigation.

The other representatives on the four-member task force are D.C. Department of Health's Richard Albright, Corps historian Mark Baker, and the RAB's technical consultant Dr. Peter deFur.

Other sampling

Schilling then reported to the board that the project partners are still interested in taking soil samples from three areas beyond the existing FUDS boundary.

He stated the reason for doing this was the presence of elevated arsenic at or near specific sections of the FUDS boundary.

The specifics of this sampling still are being discussed and finalized by the partners.

The project goal is to identify and remediate all contamination that remains from activity at the American University Experimental Station.

Schilling made it clear that sampling outside of the boundary is not the same as expanding the boundary. The issue of boundary expansion is based solely on determining what land the Army had owned, leased or borrowed at the time of the activity.

Historical records update

The final topic item of the meeting, Schilling reported that little progress has been made toward obtaining the historical records held at Fort Leonard Wood.

According to Schilling, bringing relevant documents to the Baltimore District to use in the ongoing investigation is important to both the Corps and RAB members.

Col. Charles J. Fiala, Jr., commander of the Baltimore District, is drafting a second letter to the commandant of Fort Leonard Wood to stress the importance of acquiring these documents for the Spring Valley community.

Minutes of RAB meetings and presentations are available on the project's web site at www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm

The RAB will meet again May 13 at 7 p.m. at St. David's Episcopal Church. RAB meetings are held the second Tuesday evening of every month and all meetings are open to the public. A public question and answer period is provided in the last 15 minutes of each meeting.



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

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March RAB

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partnership's inability to assess risk for compounds that may be present, but for which there is no analytical method available.

The RAB was concerned that the AUES sampling was conducted on too few properties. Schilling explained that the broad AUES List was analyzed on 10 properties; explosives and/or chemical warfare agents and their degradation products were analyzed on over 100 properties associated with Points of Interest; and arsenic sampling was conducted throughout the entire neighborhood.

This phase approach has led to over 20,000 samples being analyzed for arsenic and 3,500 samples being analyzed for other constituents. He said the

Corps believes the neighborhood has been well characterized.

To help resolve RAB concerns, Corps personnel continue to review archived records to clarify exactly how and when the data were shared.

Schilling provided the RAB with a list of efforts under way to improve future exchange of information.

Those include setting aside time at future partnership meetings to discuss any new data, sending the OU-4 data to the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventative Medicine for additional evaluation, and conducting outreach to each of the four residences, including a working meeting with those residents to be held in the following weeks.

RAB seeking members

Several of the 14 community board members have decided not to renew their terms that will expire in May.

Spring Valley residents interested in serving on the RAB are asked to complete an application and mail it to the Corps by **April 30, 2003**.

Residents can obtain an application at **www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley/rab.htm** or call 1-800-434-0988.

Current board members will review applications and select the new members.

The RAB meets the second Tuesday evening of every month.

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Baltimore Commander & District Engineer Col. Charles J. Fiala, Jr.
Lead Project Manager Gary Schilling
Public Affairs Chief Lucy Lather
Public Affairs Specialist Doug Garman