



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

<http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm>

March 2005

ATSDR report out for public comment, projects move ahead

by Gary Schilling
Program Manager

ATSDR report

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's Health Consultation for Spring Valley has been released for public comment. The report contains reassuring information for Spring Valley residents concerned about health issues.

ATSDR has placed a copy of the report at the Palisades Library and announced plans to send a mailing about the report to Spring Valley residents. The agency has extended the public comment period and is accepting comments through April 29.

The Corps will consider recommendations made by ATSDR as it continues its mission to identify and remove risks to health, safety and the environment that remain from past Defense Department activities.

Soil removal

Work continues to remove arsenic-affected soil from Spring Valley properties. A total of 31 have been completed since this work began in 2002.

Project Manager Ed Hughes still expects to have about 40 properties completed by the end of this fiscal year, Sept. 30.

Phytoremediation

About 10,000 ferns will be planted this spring on 12 to 15 properties for the 2005 phytoremediation study. The 2004 study yielded encouraging results, leading to this year's continuation of the effort.

The outreach team has begun contacting property owners with potential grids in their yards. Soil sampling in anticipation of planting began March 15.

Groundwater investigation

Wells are being installed on the federal property now. Work will begin on private property locations soon. Wells in other public spaces are awaiting permits from the D.C. government.

Installation of all 30 wells should be completed by summer. Hughes, who also manages this project, still plans to have initial data by Sept. 30.

Residential anomalies

The partners — the Corps, the D.C. Department of Health and

the Environmental Protection Agency — discussed the most recent geophysical surveys at the February meeting. Nine properties were selected for intrusive investigation this summer.

Areas of Interest Task Force

The task force conducted a tour Feb. 26 in the Dalecarlia federal property with Rick Woods. Woods, a private citizen, located the area where he had reported previously recovering ordnance items. He also identified an area he said had been covered with glass. Although no World War I debris was found, both spots were pinpointed with a Global Positioning System device for future investigation.

Lot 18

Project personnel continue preparations to re-start digging in June. Improvements are planned that include a larger engineering control structure that will also be easier to move, a larger excavator, a shaker table instead of a manual sifting table, roll-off containers to remove the soil instead of drums, and more efficient air monitoring.

Spring Valley: project or program?

The Corps of Engineers manages *projects*, and it also manages *programs*. A program is a group of related projects.

When it began, Spring Valley was a single project. Now, it is a multi-million-dollar program that comprises several projects. Gary Schilling manages the program.

Within the program, Ed Hughes manages the hazardous and toxic waste projects. Craig Georg manages the military munitions projects.

Use of the words "the project" to refer to the entire program has persisted. For example, the border line of the Spring Valley Formerly Used Defense Site was drawn in 1993. It is

customarily referred to as the "project boundary," but in 2005, it is more accurately described as the "program boundary."

Examples of individual projects are: the Lot 18 dig, arsenic-affected soil removal, the phytoremediation study, and the groundwater and residential geophysical investigations.

January, February, March RAB summaries

by Ted Henry
Community Outreach Team

Jan. 10

At the January meeting, Gary Schilling, military co-chair, provided the Restoration Advisory Board with information on several partnership meetings from the last month. He highlighted discussions on the groundwater investigation and proposed Lot 18 changes, which are of particular interest to the board and other community members.

Bill Eaton of the URS Group gave a presentation on the current groundwater investigation. Eaton described groundwater flow patterns and details of installation plans for 30 monitoring wells and three background wells. The main objectives for the investigation are to determine if American University Experiment Station activities have affected local groundwater quality and determine the relationship between groundwater flow and the reservoir.

The board also discussed the recent release of the National Academy of Science's report on perchlorate. The Spring Valley partners — the Corps, D.C. Health and the Environmental Protection Agency — informed the board that the new report would not change the way they are approaching the groundwater investigation.

Craig Georg, Military Munitions Response Program projects manager, gave a Lot 18 update. Georg said that mustard breakdown products had been found in one of the recovered items. He also discussed hazardous and toxic

waste sampling results for items recovered last summer and alternative intrusive approaches that are being explored.

Schilling also addressed board recruitment efforts. He noted that both co-chairs will sign a recruitment letter that will be sent to property owners directly affected by program activities. The board also discussed the importance of recruiting community members with science backgrounds given that several members whose terms expire currently serve on the Science Task Group.

Feb. 8

At the February meeting, Schilling reported on several recent partnering meetings that included members of EPA, D.C. Health and the Corps. Tiers 1, 2 and 3 of the Spring Valley Partnership and the Senior Executive Review Group met in January.

He also reported that the Public Affairs Work Group — public affairs professionals from the EPA, D.C. Health, American University, university contractor DecisionQuest, the Corps and Corps contractor Henry & Associates — met to discuss ways of enhancing communication with the public.

The board was informed that D.C. Health has completed its review of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease

Registry's, or ATSDR, Health Consultation for Spring Valley and that ATSDR would present its finding in March. In preparation for the release of the report and ATSDR's March presentation, Dr. Vivian Rush, a physician from the Army's Center for Health Promotion and Preventative Medicine, provided basic information on key epidemiological principles and terms.

Schilling gave an update on the various mechanisms undertaken to educate contractors working in Spring Valley on the potential hazards that could be encountered when digging. It was agreed that the Corps would include information in the *Corps'pondent* about safety fact sheets available to residents for distribution to contractors working on their properties (see p. 4).

In an effort to keep the board well integrated into the project, the Corps distributed three documents: the *Draft Final Partner Initiative to Address*

RAB report continued on p. 4

Restoration Advisory Board openings

The board is recruiting for one currently open community slot and nine that will be open in July. The Corps will also consider recommendations for a laborer/contractor seat. Anyone interested in applying should contact Ben Rooney at 410-962-0157, or by leaving a message on the toll free line, 800-434-0988, or by email at:

Ben.Rooney@usace.army.mil

Restoration Advisory Board meeting

Tuesday, April 12, 7 p.m.
St. David's Episcopal Church
Macomb Street

Community session from
6:30 to 7 p.m. with EPA, D.C. Health
and the Corps

Media misses the mark

In March, several reporting errors about the Spring Valley Formerly Used Defense Site were published.

✓ The problems in the *Northwest Current's* March 16 article about the visit to Dalecarlia Woods (see Gary Schilling's update, p. 1, on this subject) start with the headline. Rick Woods identified two sites during the Feb. 26 visit. The Corps of Engineers merely flagged them. Both spots were also pinpointed with a Global Positioning System device.

Identified sites

Woods identified one site where he said he had found munitions in the past and one where he said he had seen broken glass. Another site was also flagged where a metal detector indicated metal beneath the surface. The story implies a 10-foot-by-10-foot pit was located that day, but neither a pit nor munitions were found. At this point, it is simply not known whether there is a burial pit at any of the three sites identified.

These three locations will be investigated in the future. The Corps and its Spring Valley partners, the D.C. Department of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency, will conduct geophysical surveys to determine whether anything related to World War I activities still remains in this area.

Flags, anomalies

The "official" who spoke anonymously to the *Current* was guilty of gross exaggeration. The only Corps official who placed flags that day — Maj. Thomas Verell, Spring Valley site operations officer —

placed only the three mentioned above.

The opinion that metallic anomalies represented several shells together is a guess based on very limited data. Metal detectors do not have the ability to actually see through soil. The anomalies could be anything from munitions to a pipe, a piece of the railway or a rock.

Even when the geophysical surveys are conducted in future years, the partnership will only be able to make an educated guess of what metallic anomalies *could be* munitions. With the limitations of the available technology, actually digging up anomalies is the only way to confirm with 100 percent accuracy whether a buried object is a munition.

Facts given to the RAB

Contrary to the article's assertions, statements made by program manager Gary Schilling to the Restoration Advisory Board about the visit were factual. The Woods visit was discussed for less than a minute during the board meeting, and Schilling reported two basic facts: that Woods identified the location where he had recovered ordnance items in the 1980s and that no new ordnance-related items were seen.

Railway significance

The article also reports an incorrect assumption that the burial pit (sic) and narrow-gauge railroad prove a large burial operation was undertaken. The existence of the railway has been known for years, but *when* it was built and used is still unknown. Some speculate it was constructed for the Ameri-

can University Experiment Station. Others think it more likely it was built for use in the construction of the nearby reservoir. There may well have been some other purpose in another timeframe altogether. Its existence is a fact that proves nothing else. At this point, saying otherwise is merely conjecture, but the partners will consider this information during the investigation of the area in the future.

Magic maps

As for maps that document burials, if there were a map or maps that told where everything was left behind during World War I activities in Spring Valley, the entire Spring Valley team would rejoice. The Corps, on behalf of the Department of Defense, is committed to cleaning up contamination from past Army activities at the experiment station. Such a map would make the job of identifying and removing or remediating risks to health, safety and the environment much easier.

✓ WJLA Channel 7's March 18 Spring Valley report was off the accuracy mark. Instead of ignoring Spring Valley, the Army has spent over \$100 million on the cleanup effort.

The story also misidentified the quantity and type of information that was obtained from the Feb. 26 Dalecarlia Woods visit. There is no verifiable data to support the contention that munitions burial pits were located.

And contrary to Channel 7's report, the size and scope of the Spring Valley Formerly Used Defense Site cleanup remains the same as before the Woods visit.



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Official Business

RAB report *continued from p.2*

Stakeholder Health Concerns; the Draft Final Data Sharing Approach; and the Draft Final Documentation Development and Finalization Approach. Community board members were asked to review the documents and provide comments.

Mar. 8

At the March meeting, most recent project efforts were provided in the co-chair updates in the first few minutes of the meeting. Issues briefly touched upon included recent partnering meetings, Lot 18 progress, the Rick Woods site visit, the installation of groundwater wells and phytoremediation.

In a follow-up to a previous request, the draft final 2004 phytoremediation report was provided to the board for review and comment.

A nominating committee for

the June elections was formed.

The majority of the meeting was set aside for ATSDR's presentation on their Health Consultation for Spring Valley, which was released for public comment in late February. The overall conclusion was that no community-wide adverse health effects are expected due to American University Experiment Station activities and that, excluding burial pits and disposal areas, contaminants are below levels that may cause adverse health effects. ATSDR made some recommendations to residents regarding reporting

suspicious items, to D.C. Health about the need to further assess leukemia rates and to the Corps regarding additional soil and soil gas sampling.

The comment period allows the community an opportunity to review the report and provide feedback to ATSDR. The comment period extends through April 29. The project lead is Laura Frazier, 404-498-0386.

Detailed minutes of these meetings and slides from presentations to the board are also available on the web site at: <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm>.

Having digging done on your property?

Fact sheets designed for contractors working in Spring Valley are available from the Corps of Engineers:

- Call the toll-free information line at 1-800-434-0988; or
- Call the community outreach team at 410-962-0157; or
- Send a request via email to Ben.Rooney@usace.army.mil.

Please provide a mailing address, and the fact sheet will be sent to you.

The Corps' pondent

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