



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

May 2001

## Corps to begin expanded soil sampling in June

by Maj. Michael Peloquin  
Spring Valley Operations Officer

As many of you know, in June we will begin collecting soil samples from properties across the Spring Valley neighborhood in an effort to identify any areas that might contain elevated levels of arsenic.

In addition to sampling for arsenic, we will also test for specific lists of potential contaminants in those areas where World War I field-testing is believed to have occurred, based on aerial and ground photographs, testing reports and other historical documents.

These areas are known as Points of Interests, or POIs. The POIs of concern are all located within a portion of the commu-

nity referred to in our sampling plan as the Central Testing Area, or CTA.

The referenced list of potential contaminants was determined in partnership with the D.C. Department of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency. We also feel this additional sampling is warranted to address those concerns we received from residents during the public comment period for the soil sampling proposal.

Since announcing the comprehensive soil sampling proposal at a community meeting March 14, several residents have contacted us requesting their properties be placed on a priority-sampling list. In response to these requests, we will sample first those properties

with young children, a pending real estate transaction or a health-related issue.

In conjunction with this priority sampling, we will begin the area-wide sampling of properties within the CTA in early June.

Sampling will start in the northern portion of this area and work southward. Following sampling in the CTA, we will sample the remaining portions of the neighborhood, which we tentatively plan to finish early next year.

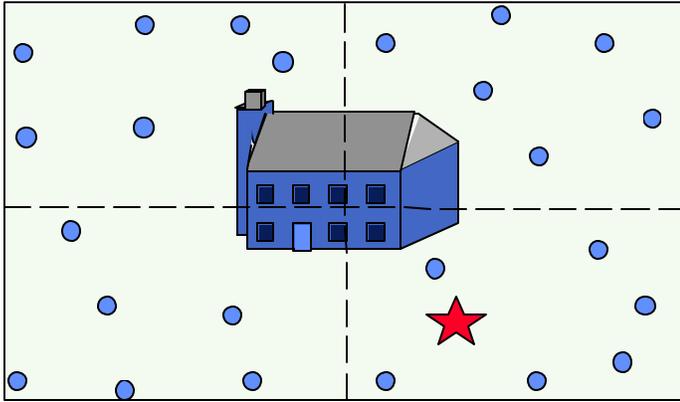
Under this area-wide sampling effort, all properties in the CTA will have four six-part composite samples taken from the surface soil. Properties



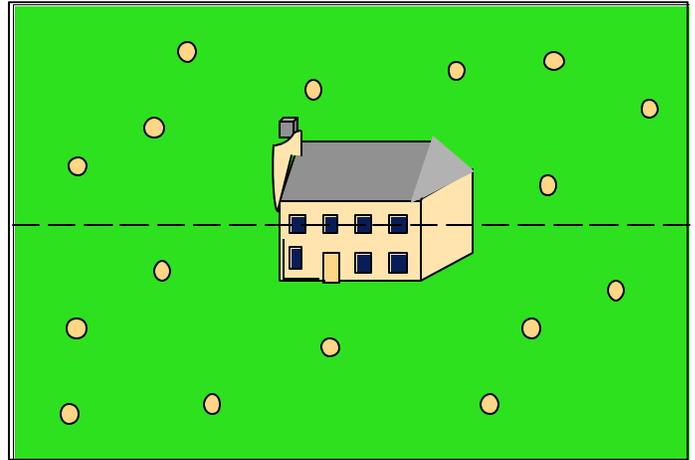
Soil is composited together from six sampling locations on a property.



The worker removes a pink flag marking a sampling location.



**Sampling within the central testing area. The star represents one subsurface sample that will be taken on each property in the CTA.**



**Sampling plan outside the central testing area**

## Sampling plan to begin in June (continued from cover)

outside the CTA will have two eight-part composite samples taken.

While the sampling locations will be randomly selected, we can adjust some of them for include areas of concern to the property owner.

Property owners can provide this information by calling our information line, submitting a note with their Right of Entry form, or telling our representative when you are contacted several days before the sampling occurs.

The depth of these samples will be from 0 to 6 inches in accordance with the EPA's Soils Screening Guidance.

Surface soil is the most significant exposure pathway for contamination. We are aware that many property owners have placed up to two feet of topsoil on their properties or regularly dig to depths greater than 6 inches during gardening activities.

However, in coordination with the EPA and DC Department of Health, we have concluded that our emphasis must be on the primary exposure pathway. Support for this position is that the majority of arsenic contamination found to

date has been in surface layers, even in places where topsoil has been placed. Subsurface sampling will provide an indication of contamination below 6 inches.

In addition to the composite surface sampling for arsenic, every property in the CTA and 15 percent of properties outside the CTA will receive subsurface sampling.

This sampling will consist of one boring to a depth of 6 to 10 feet, depending on the cut or fill in the area, with samples taken every foot and analyzed for arsenic.

At the request of the property owner, we can take the subsurface boring from a garden area or other location of concern. However, for properties in a POI the subsurface boring location will be based on our evaluation of historical information.

In addition to sampling for arsenic in the CTA area, we will also sample for a specific list of contaminants discussed above at those properties within the seven POIs of concern.

This sample will be taken in conjunction with the subsurface boring for arsenic. Soil from the sample collected at and immediately below the 1918 elevation

will be tested for the additional contaminants.

The list of POIs and the specific potential contaminants that will be tested for at a particular POI is provided in the final Operable Unit 5 Sampling Plan.

The plan is available on the project's web site or you can request a copy by calling the project's information line at 1-800-434-0988.

### Coordination with Residents

Before we can sample a property, we must have the permission of the property owner with a signed right-of-entry form.

You can obtain a copy of the 2001 right-of-entry form by calling Melissa Jones, Corps of Engineers' Real Estate Office at 410-962-5166 or the toll-free number at 1-800-434-0988.

You can also download a copy from the Spring Valley Internet web site at: <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm>.

If you wish to have your property sampled, we encourage you to obtain a copy of this form and return it to us as soon as possible. We thank those of you who have already returned it.

Prior to sampling your property, a representative of the Corps of Engineers will contact you at least three working days before the work begins. At that time, we will finalize the date that your property will be sampled, discuss the areas on your property to be sampled and answer any questions you might have regarding this work. It is not necessary for you to be present during the sampling.

The sampling will consist of contract personnel entering your property, identifying the sampling locations, gathering a small amount of surface soil and in some cases, a small amount of subsurface soil, and then exiting your property. The effort should take no more than a few hours.

The soil from your property will be sent to an EPA-approved laboratory to be tested and analyzed for arsenic and any other compounds as identified in the final OU5 soil sampling plan.

Given the volume of samples, it will be about 45 days before we will have the final arsenic sampling results for your property.

The estimated time to receive the sampling results for the other compounds is about two months. Each property owner will receive a copy of the results with a letter explaining what is meant in terms of comparison to background levels and health risk levels. If your property would happen to have elevated levels of the compounds of concern, we will contact you to arrange for

more detailed testing of your property. The Corps will be responsible for costs associated with any removal action deemed necessary from the sampling, as well as any subsequent property restoration that may be required.

During this effort we will continue to update the community on the status of the sampling through this newsletter, meetings and the project's website. Our next community meeting is **scheduled for Tuesday, June 19, at 7 p.m., at the Sibley Hospital Auditorium.**

If you have any questions about the upcoming sampling effort or other Corps activities in the Spring Valley area, please call the project information line at 1-800-434-0988.

## Corps unearths third burial pit at Glenbrook Road site

The Corps recently began digging operations in an attempt to locate one or more potential burial pits in the backyard of 4825 Glenbrook Road, the property nearest the area where two burial pits were removed last year.

On the first day of operations, workers unearthed what appears to be a burial pit.

While digging the first test pit, workers recovered broken and intact lab glassware and what appears to be a crushed five-gallon container.

No chemical agents were detected. The materials have been properly packaged and removed from the site for further testing. Workers continued to find pieces of glassware to a depth of four feet.

At that time, workers stopped digging and filled in the test pit. This area has been noted as a burial pit and will be further investigated once the remaining 35 test pits are completed on the property.

Meanwhile, preliminary restoration activities continue at the adjacent property, 4801 Glenbrook. Restoration



**A contract worker digs a test pit at the Glenbrook Road property.**

work at the Small Disposal Area and adjoining streambed will begin pending the outcome of confirmatory soil samples of the lower stream located on the property of 4801 Glenbrook.



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

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## RAB meets for the first time

The newly established Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board, or RAB, met for the first time May 14 at the Westmoreland Congregational Church.

The RAB's 14 community members and representatives from the Corps, EPA, DC Health, American University, Miller Company and Horace Mann School discussed a number of topics to include the operating procedures for the RAB, status of the right-of-entry forms and the area-wide soil sampling plan.

In regard to a final area-wide sampling plan, the Corps is trying to balance community member requests for RAB input into the draft sampling plan and the desire expressed by many community residents for the Corps to initiate and complete sampling as quick as possible.

The Corps provided the RAB with much of the supporting documentation and logic behind the area-wide sampling that is planned and some initial discussion took place in the meeting about these topics.

Additional discussion centered

on whether it was feasible for the RAB to apply for a technical assistance grant to aid in its review of the Corps' sampling plan. However, after learning that obtaining such assistance could delay sampling for up to six months and recognizing the community's desire to initiate sampling immediately, there was consensus among the RAB that the Corps should proceed with sampling.

The Corps acknowledges that RAB input into the initial sampling to begin in June has been severely limited by the inherent time constraints associated with the quick development of the area-wide sampling approach, the time it took to establish the RAB and the time needed to secure technical assistance funding for the RAB to hire its own technical consultants to review the plan.

Regardless of these challenges facing the RAB members, the Corps is committed to making the RAB an effective mechanism for community involvement in the development and execution of cleanup efforts in Spring

## Meeting Notice

The next community meeting will be **Tuesday, June 19, 2001**, beginning at **7 p.m.** at **Sibley Hospital Auditorium**. All residents are invited to attend. Spring Valley residents may use the Corps' free parking area in front of the trailers behind the hospital.

Valley. In turn, the Corps intends to continue to discuss the current sampling efforts with the RAB, listen to concerns that are raised and consider future suggestions that protect human health and the environment and are cost effective.

Please note that the next **RAB meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 13, at 7 p.m.**, at the Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church. The public is welcome to attend these meetings.

## The Corps' pondent

*The Corps' pondent* is an unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR360-81 and published by the Public Affairs Office, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, P.O. Box 1715, Baltimore, Md. 21203-1715. Telephone: (410) 962-2809; fax: (410) 962-3660, Spring Valley Information Line (1-800-434-0988). It is printed on recyclable paper; press run 1,200. All manuscripts submitted are subject to editing and rewriting. Material from this publication may be reproduced without permission. Views and opinions are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Project web page: <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm>

**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**