



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

November/December 2002

Corps begins second set of residential soil removals

by Maj. Michael Peloquin
Spring Valley Operations Officer

With the removal of arsenic-contaminated soil and the restoration of this work all but complete on the first nine residential properties, the Corps has begun soil removal on a second group of properties under a time critical removal action.

The project partners identified a total of 11 residential properties and one property owned by the D.C. government to be included in this next set.

Each of these properties contains at least one grid with arsenic soil levels above 150 parts-per-million or ppm.

Once this group is completed, the Corps will have addressed all of the priority properties identified by the project partners.

The Corps estimates that the soil removal and restoration of these properties will continue until the spring of 2003.

Remaining properties

For the remaining Spring Valley properties with arsenic levels above the cleanup goal of 20 ppm, the Corps continues its development of the Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis, or EE/CA.

This document will guide the cleanup of these properties as a non-time critical removal action

to be conducted over the next several years.

The EE/CA will be released for a 30-day public comment period this winter. Actual soil removals under the EE/CA will

not begin until we address all comments from project partners and the public.

The Corps will provide the draft EE/CA to the Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board for comment and will work with the project partners on the final prioritization scheme to be used in developing a time schedule for remediating these properties.

American University

The investigation of the remaining 35 grids on the American University campus began earlier this month. A number of anomalies were detected in these grids earlier this year.

Some of these grids also contain arsenic soil that will be removed in conjunction with this anomaly investigation.

Once this work is completed



Workers remove arsenic-contaminated soil from a Spring Valley property.

photo by Severson Environmental

in early 2003, the restoration of these areas, as well as the adjacent Small Disposal Area and AU Child Development Center, will begin.

FY03 Activities

In addition to residential soil removals, the Corps will conduct additional geophysical investigations at between one and two-dozen properties. The Corps also plans to investigate key features located on the former AUES grounds.

These features, consisting of a concrete shell pit and livens gun pit, have been the subject of partner interest in recent months.

They are close to what is now the American University intramural field, where AU grounds border the end of Woodway Lane.

October RAB update

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

During the administrative portion of the meeting, Maj. Michael Peloquin introduced the newest RAB member, EPA Region III's Steve Hirsh. Hirsh replaces Frank Vavra as the EPA's remedial project manager for Spring Valley.

Dorothy Zolandz, community RAB member, gave an update on the science task group's efforts to determine if board members' concerns regarding the government's soil sampling plan have been adequately addressed.

The task group has been engaged in examining each concern and the correlating responses. The group expects a report by the end of the year.

Sarah Shapley, community co-chair, announced the formation of a RAB committee to examine possible courses of action to investigate indemnification from the government against loss of property value. While the Corps has indicated that this is not possible, it remains an issue of concern for some RAB members.

Peloquin briefed the board on the Donovan Blast Chamber, a piece of technology that will likely be employed to destroy the

explosively configured rounds unearthed at the project over the last year.

The device is capable of safely detonating unexploded ordnance and safely processing the waste gases generated by the detonation. The chamber is mobile and will likely be brought to Spring Valley the first of the year.

Board members expressed concern with detonating the ordnance in Spring Valley, but Peloquin explained that using the chamber to destroy the ordnance on site is safer and more feasible than transporting it to another location.

The Donovan chamber has been successfully implemented at other sites, including the Massachusetts Military Reservation.

Peloquin next briefed on discussions among the project partners (USACE, EPA Region III, D.C. Department of Health) about expansion of the soil sampling program to include a few properties beyond the current project boundary.

Results from arsenic sampling revealed a handful of properties along the project boundary with elevated arsenic. As a result, the partnership is exploring additional sampling just beyond the boundary line in a few locations.

Peloquin also briefed the

board on the partners' ongoing discussions regarding the possible investigation of additional areas where AUES materials may have been buried.

Peloquin explained his goal of having agreement among the partners on a process for introducing and analyzing new points of interest that will both protect the community and use project funds efficiently. The RAB's technical advisor will attend a future partnering meeting to discuss these areas.

Shapley provided a brief update on Washington, D.C.'s recent reduction of this year's property tax increases for Spring Valley residents who have appealed their most recent property tax assessment.

These residents cited the ongoing investigation and soil removal as reason for their requested discounts.

She also provided updates on D.C. Health's health surveillance program, ATSDR's schedule for publishing the results of its most recent exposure investigation, and the designation of a mayoral liaison to help get funding for the project.

Minutes of this meeting and past ones can be found on Baltimore District's website, <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm>.



Left: Mechanical equipment is used to remove arsenic-contaminated soil from the backyard of a Spring Valley property. Right: Following soil removal, workers restore a Spring Valley yard by placing backfill and top soil, compacting the soil and placing sod.

photos by Severson Environmental

November RAB update

The Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board met Nov. 12 at St. David's Episcopal Church.

The meeting began with updates from several of the RAB's task groups.

Science task group

Dorothy Zolandz reported on the science task group's recent meeting with the TAPP contractor, Dr. DeFlur, and fellow RAB member, Kent Slowinski, to discuss the Corps' soil sampling methods.

Indemnification issue

Davis Robinson and Priscilla Holmes, community RAB members, provided a brief update on their efforts to examine the issue of a resident indemnification from future loss or damage due to the DoD contamination. They asked the Corps to provide any information relating to the issue that might have been developed during the Corps' 1993-1995 investigation.

Comfort letter

RAB member Woody Bolton, a member of the "comfort" letter task group, provided an update on the development of this letter. RAB members were asked to review the report and its attachments and provide comments to the task group by Nov. 20.

New co-chair

RAB member Greg Beumel, provided an update on the efforts to elect a new community co-chair. Current community co-chair, Sarah Shapley, and RAB member Dorothy Zolandz have been nominated for the next six-month term. The RAB discussed methods on how to proceed with the election. The task group is also working to further define the responsibilities of the co-chair.

Trip to Missouri

Terry Slonecker, a technician with EPA's Environment Photographic Interpretation Center, reported on the recent trip to Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., the home of the Army Chemical School, to review historical documents related to the Army's research at the American University Experiment Station.

Mark Baker, Baltimore District historian, and Ken Shuster, EPA, accompanied Slonecker on the trip where they identified approximately 2,300 photographs and about 350 linear feet of boxed documents pertaining to AUES.

Because of a March 2001 White House letter restricting access to documents relating to weapons of mass destruction, the team could not copy or remove any of the documents. They did compile an inventory list.

The Corps has agreed to prepare a letter to the commander of the chemical school requesting copies of specific photos and documents that may be useful in investigating past activities at AUES.

Future geophysical work

Maj. Michael Peloquin briefed the board on the geophysical investigations planned for the remainder of the fiscal year. Though not yet finalized with the project partners, the Corps plan focuses on three key areas to include the Sedgwick trench area, Woodway Lane area and support to soil removal actions. The Corps has provided the project partners a draft list of properties for work this year based on these key areas.

The goal is to minimize the time between geophysical surveys and any subsequent investi-

gation. Richard Albright, D.C. Department of Health, commented that the Corps and D.C. Health were close to agreeing on the final list of properties to be surveyed this year.

Medical surveillance system

Dr. Michael Richardson, senior deputy director of Medical Affairs with the D.C. Department of Health, provided an overview of the ongoing medical surveillance system of the Spring Valley community.

His office has sent a letter to about 150 physicians in the D.C. area asking them to report any arsenic-related illnesses or diseases among residents of the Spring Valley neighborhood.

The Corps agreed to post a copy of this letter on the Spring Valley website to assist D.C. Health in building awareness for the effort.

Richardson said that any physician could report potential arsenic poisoning in their Spring Valley patients whether or not they received his letter.

The next RAB meeting begins at **7 p.m. Dec. 10** at St. David's Episcopal Church. The public is invited to attend.

Please Note

Visit the Baltimore District website at <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm> for the minutes of all RAB meetings, as well as current information on the ongoing work of this project.



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D.C. Health Department conducts medical surveillance

In response to residents' concerns regarding exposure to arsenic and other contaminants in the Spring Valley neighborhood, the District of Columbia Mayor's Spring Valley Scientific Advisory Panel has recommended that the D.C. Department of Health establish a medical surveillance system to obtain a "rapid suspected case count" of any arsenic-related illnesses among Spring Valley residents.

The D.C. Health Department's Medical Affairs Office has sent letters to approximately 150 physicians in the D.C. area.

In the letter, physicians are asked to report any such suspected cases to the Health Department.

The medical surveillance record will include time, place, and person, along with the reporting physician's name. Clinical details of suspected cases are not being collected.

Earlier this year, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and D.C. Health undertook an exposure investigation and analysis of persons whose homes had the highest arsenic levels in

composite soil samples taken from their property.

Also, the D.C. Cancer Registry did an analysis of possible arsenic related malignancies reported from D.C. over the past 15 years.

In both cases, there was no evidence of an unusually high rate of arsenic related illness among residents of Spring Valley neighborhoods.

For questions about the medical surveillance effort, please contact Dr. Michael Richardson, Senior Deputy Director, Medical Affairs Office at 202-442-9196.

E-mail address

Sarah Shapley, RAB co-chair, has established an e-mail address, **springvalleydc@starpower.net**, for Spring Valley residents to contact her. If you would like information about the project that might not appear on the Corps' website or in this newsletter, please send an e-mail to Sarah at the above address.

The Corps' pondent

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