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Media Advisory

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Corps to hold Spring Valley community meeting March 14, officials to discuss expanded soil sampling efforts

Baltimore – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, will hold a community meeting on Wednesday, March 14, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, 3401 Nebraska Ave., N.W. At the meeting, officials will discuss the status of cleanup activities, including a draft plan to expand the soil sampling effort in the Spring Valley community. **Media representatives are advised that no cameras will be allowed in the church sanctuary.**

At a Feb. 13 community meeting, residents expressed concern about the Corps' current soil-sampling plan. Those concerns prompted the Corps, with its partners the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region III and the District of Columbia Department of Health, to evaluate a more comprehensive sampling plan. The details of this draft plan will be presented to the community at the Mar. 14 meeting. Following the meeting, residents will be provided a 30-day period to review and comment on the draft soil-sampling plan.

Presently, the Army is taking soil samples in selected areas of the community, the site of the former American University Experiment Station, which was used by the Army during World War I. Elevated levels of arsenic have been found in soil removed last year from burial pits containing World War I material on a Glenbrook Road property. Elevated levels of arsenic have also been detected in surface soil samples collected near the American University Child Development Center.

Arsenic is a component of Lewisite, one of the World War I chemical agents developed at the American University Experiment Station. It also is a naturally occurring element widely distributed in the environment. Low levels of arsenic are found in most fossil fuels, but the main use of arsenic in the United States is for pesticides.

From 1917 to 1920 military personnel conducted research on and performed small-scale testing of chemical warfare items at the experiment station. More information about the Spring Valley project can be found at this website,

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