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News Release

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Elevated levels of arsenic found at several Spring Valley properties

Baltimore – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials announced today that it has found much higher than anticipated levels of arsenic in the soil at several residential properties in the 4400 block of Tindall Street in the AU Park neighborhood adjacent to Spring Valley. Since May, the Corps has been conducting a comprehensive soil sampling effort across both the AU Park and Spring Valley neighborhoods to identify areas containing elevated levels of arsenic. Testing results in the last week have identified a pocket of contamination at levels as high as 400 parts-per-million. These levels are similar to those found last January at American University's Child Development Center.

In response to this discovery, Corps officials plan to expedite the cleanup of these properties under a Time Critical Removal Action. This action allows the Corps to initiate work in a much shorter timeframe than typically possible. The cleanup will involve replacing the contaminated surface soil with clean fill and topsoil and then restoring damaged landscaping. Officials have begun coordinating this action with each of the property owners.

In addition to removing the contaminated soil, the Corps has coordinated with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the District of Columbia Department of Health to follow up on health concerns of the residents living at these properties. This could include risk counseling and exposure testing. An exposure study was conducted by ATSDR last February on children attending the American University Child Development Center. The results of this study did not show an exposure to elevated arsenic for any of the children.

To date, Corps officials have completed sampling for arsenic at approximately 1,000 of the 1,600 residential and non-residential properties in the neighborhood. The Corps has received preliminary results on 920 of these properties, of which 103 properties will require more detailed follow-on grid sampling. As this comprehensive soil sampling effort nears its completion, Corps officials encourage those Spring Valley and AU Park residents who live within the project site and would like their property sampled, but have not yet submitted a right of entry form, to call the Spring Valley project's toll-free information line at **1-800-434-0988** to request a copy of the form. There are currently about 30 properties in the Fort Gaines portion of AU Park neighborhood for which the Corps has not received right of entry forms.

Historical records indicate that portions of the Spring Valley neighborhood were once used by military personnel assigned to the former American University Experiment Station from 1917-1919, to conduct research and testing on World War I chemical warfare materials. In the same period, portions of AU Park were used as a soldier training area known as Camp Leach. Records indicate that Camp Leach was independent of the American University Experiment Station, and that it was not used for chemical research or testing. Therefore, investigators did not anticipate the highly elevated arsenic levels at the AU Park properties. The arsenic may be the result of soil movement during the development of this area. The Corps continues to investigate records and assess the history of this site.

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