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of Engineers

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News Release

Release No. 02-04
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For Release: February 6, 2002
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Soil sampling results indicate no arsenic concerns at Friendship (Turtle) Park in the Spring Valley area

Baltimore - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials announced today that the preliminary results of soil testing at Friendship (Turtle) Park in the AU Park neighborhood indicate that arsenic levels are within acceptable levels established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and that no additional testing in the park will be needed. According to officials, all the samples taken were below 12.6 parts-per-million.

Since late May 2001, the Corps has been conducting comprehensive soil sampling across the Spring Valley, AU Park and Fort Gaines neighborhoods in an effort to identify areas containing elevated levels of arsenic. To date, soil sampling has been completed at 84 percent of the 1,481 total properties and lots located within the Spring Valley project boundary. Of these, 144 properties have been recommended for additional sampling. This follow-on sampling is nearly complete.

Based on this additional sampling, seven properties, six of which are in the AU Park/Fort Gaines area, will be remediated through a Time Critical Removal Action that will begin this spring. The remaining properties requiring remediation will be addressed through a Non-Time Critical Removal Action.

Sampling of AU Park was completed the first week of January, following a collaborative effort among the Corps, the Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board, Friends of Friendship Park and the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation. Corps contractors worked directly with the local neighborhood group that helps oversee the park in developing the sampling plan.

"This direct collaboration with those that live in the neighborhood and use the park helps ensure that the results of the sampling effort will address their concerns," said Deputy District Engineer for the Spring Valley project Maj. Michael Pelouin.

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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