



US Army Corps
of Engineers

Baltimore District

Public Affairs Office
P.O. Box 1715
Baltimore, MD 21203
(410) 962-2809
Fax: (410) 962-3660

News Release

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Contact: Doug Garman or Major Mike Peloquin
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Phone: 410-962-2809 or 410-984-9272

Army provides additional federal funds to Spring Valley project

Baltimore - Officials with the U.S. Department of the Army recently approved additional federal funds for 2002 to support the Army Corps of Engineers' investigation and cleanup of past military activities in the Spring Valley neighborhood in northwest Washington, D.C.

The Corps recently requested additional funds to offset the unplanned costs associated with the ongoing excavation on Glenbrook Road. The costs of this excavation was absorbing the project's 2002 budget at the expense of other work activities identified in this year's approved work plan. The additional funds will allow the Army to keep its commitments to the community regarding critical work for 2002. Among these is the Time Critical Removal Action of arsenic-contaminated soil on seven Spring Valley properties and the investigation of potential burial sites associated with the "Sedgwick trench," a 1918-era testing site.

Since beginning its investigation in March 1999, the Corps has safely removed hundreds of military remnants and soil from two burial pits discovered adjacent to American University. A third adjacent pit is currently being excavated. In May 2001, the Corps broadened its search to include the entire the Spring Valley neighborhood and the AU Park and Fort Gaines neighborhoods. This involved a comprehensive soil sampling across every property within this area in an effort to identify any areas containing elevated levels of arsenic. To date, soil sampling has been completed at 90 percent of the 1,483 total properties and lots located within the Spring Valley project boundary. From this initial soil screening, 146 properties were recommended for additional sampling. This follow-on sampling is nearly complete.

Based on the results of 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. The funds provided this week by the Department of the Army allow this work to begin this year. The remaining properties requiring remediation will be addressed through a Non-Time Critical Removal Action.

"The Corps of Engineers is committed to aggressively pursuing the identification and remediation of all hazards associated with past military activities in the Spring Valley neighborhood," said Deputy District Engineer for the Spring Valley project Maj. Michael Peloquin. "This commitment is demonstrated by the extensive ongoing activities and the application of resources from numerous federal agencies to include on-site support from the world's foremost experts on ordnance, chemical warfare material and aerial photo interpretation."

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.