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News Release

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Army Corps of Engineers to begin cleanup of arsenic contaminated soil at residential properties in Spring Valley

Baltimore - This week the Army Corps of Engineers will begin to remove arsenic contaminated soil from the first of the seven residential properties identified for an expedited soil removal action. Prior soil testing at these properties identified arsenic levels at most of these properties to be equal to or above those levels found at the American University Child Development Center. These seven properties are located in the Spring Valley and Fort Gaines/AU Park neighborhoods.

At each property, contaminated soil will be excavated to a depth of two feet and confirmation sampling will then be taken to ensure no elevated levels of arsenic remain. The Corps will continue to remove soil downward and laterally until the confirmation samples are below 20 parts per million. The excavated soil will be transported off-site in covered trucks to a permitted non-hazardous waste facility in Virginia. The excavated area will be filled with clean soil. Dust control measures will be used during this work, including wetting the soil and using monitoring equipment to check air quality. Cleanup at each property is expected to take several weeks. The Corps has offered to temporarily relocate residents of the seven properties during the work due to safety concerns associated with the excavation.

“The start of the soil removal work at residential properties is another important step toward achieving the project partnership's goal of identifying and remediating any hazards associated with past military activities in the Spring Valley neighborhood,” said Maj. Michael Peloquin, deputy district engineer for the Spring Valley project.

Additionally, the Corps and its project partners, the Environmental Protection Agency and the D.C. Department of Health, will address a second round of properties that have individual arsenic grids above 150 parts per million, but did not qualify for the initial removal efforts planned this summer. In the next few weeks, the project partners will meet with these property owners to discuss alternatives available for reducing exposure to these grids. Possible actions include grid removal, sodding of contaminated areas, or marking the grids so residents can avoid these areas. The project partner's goal in addressing these grids is to reduce property owner concerns until the entire property can be addressed based on the EPA-accepted prioritization approach using the property-wide arsenic level (called the exposure point concentration). As a result of the area-wide soil sampling last year, the Corps estimates that 160 residential properties will qualify for arsenic contamination soil removal.

On June 26, the Corps began the removal of arsenic contaminated soil from the property next to the American University's Child Development Center and the adjacent intramural fields. This work is progressing as planned and will take several months to complete.

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 not used for chemical research or testing.