Dear Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board Members

As discussed in our monthly Partnering meeting last week, three sealed glass containers were recovered in March and April during the Lot 18 investigation. The Corps sent these containers to Edgewood Chemical and Biological Command for chemical warfare materiel (CWM) analysis on August 27, 2003. On August 28, we confirmed that one of the three glass containers held approximately 6 milliliters (tablespoon size) of solution containing approximately 0.3% Lewisite. The contents of the other two sealed, glass containers were solid, non-CWM chemical mixtures, which will take several weeks to analyze completely. Once we have validated data back from the lab or other additional information, we will share it with you, our regulatory partners, and Dr. deFur.

As previously reported to the RAB, test results from one sealed, glass container found in November 2002 during our previous Lot 18 work indicated no CWM was present. Past reporting also indicated a number of empty munitions had been found. Since the August 2003 RAB meeting, the Corps determined that many more glass containers and munition casings were recovered than previously reported. Approximately three dozen glass containers of interest and two dozen empty ordnance items were recovered during the site work conducted between November 2002 and May 2003.

The recovered glassware containers from Lot 18 were identified by the on-site safety officer as not being CWM (i.e., mustard or Lewisite) based on a variety of factors. First, many of the bottles were not completely sealed, making the presence of CWM after eight decades remote. Second, Lot 18 is a poorly drained area, often with standing water, adding to the likelihood that CWM would have degraded. Third, physical characteristics including bottle markings, viscosity, color, smell and the presence of suspended particulates were considered in determining the materials were not CWM. Once the field decision was made that a specific item did not contain CWM, the item and its contents were placed in a bleach solution in accordance with established safety procedures. The three recovered containers analyzed last week were considered sealed at the time of recovery and, thus, packaged appropriately and placed in safe storage for later lab analysis.

When an intact container is recovered at a low-probability dig site, normal procedures trigger the halting of work, the removal of the item, and the analysis of any contents for CWM. The absence of CWM is to be confirmed before work resumes. We acknowledge the fact that this did not occur in this instance, and we are conducting an after action review of field activities at this site. We will share these findings with the RAB, and will be open to RAB thoughts and suggestions regarding improvements.

While this current information and future Lot 18 work will require RAB discussion, I thought I should at least briefly touch upon information sharing, past work, and future action now, in order to address a few of the immediate questions you might have. In follow-up, we will set some time aside for discussing this topic at the September 9 RAB meeting.

Information Sharing - I apologize for not having reported the extent of recovered items to you sooner. Because we identified Lot 18 as a low-probability site for encountering CWM, we did not distribute a daily list of recovered items during the investigation. Steps are being taken to identify how we can keep all stakeholders better informed of field findings. Daily review of field data for even low probability sites is one of several options being considered.

Lot 18 Work during FY-03 – The Corps does not believe any increased risk to the community existed during the FY-03 work for several reasons. First, soil analysis conducted to date at Lot 18 for CWM breakdown products was negative, noting there was one detection of cyanide (3.3 parts per million or ppm) below its risk based concentration of 1600 ppm, which was reported to the RAB previously. Second, site workers wore Level D worker protection (i.e., construction boots, hard hats, and gloves) and no incidents were reported suggesting that additional safety requirements were needed. Third, a conservative mathematical dispersion model run by the Corps, to evaluate a six-milliliter release of 100% Lewisite solution under worst case conditions, indicated there would be no effect on anyone beyond a distance of one meter. It also should be noted that when we ceased operations temporarily in the spring due to financial constraints, the site was back-filled to original grade in consultation with our regulatory partners.

Future Lot 18 Work – The Corps has re-designated Lot 18 as a high probability site for encountering CWM based on the quantity of recovered laboratory and ordnance-related items, and the recent analytical results. As a result, more stringent safety procedures will be used when work resumes in late 2003 or early 2004. This will result in a more deliberate and costly investigation at Lot 18. Consideration of how this may change FY-04 priorities was initiated at our August 26 Partnering meeting, and we will update the RAB on these discussions shortly. It should also be noted that significant outreach to the nearby residents and American University campus will be conducted prior to resuming the Lot 18 investigation.

In the spirit of open communication, I am sending you this initial update now, rather than waiting for the RAB meeting next week. I am sure this brief summary does not answer all your questions, but I hope it provides a starting point for additional dialogue. Please feel free to call or send an e-mail expressing your thoughts and questions in preparation for the September RAB. We will try to have at least some initial answers for you by the meeting.

As for communicating with the broader public, please note that a press release will be sent out tomorrow, a copy of which is attached to this e-mail. Additionally, we will address this issue in the next edition of the *Corps'pondent*.

Sincerely,

Gary Schilling
Spring Valley Project Manager