

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia

June 10, 2009

**William C. Early
Acting Regional Administrator
US Environmental Protection Agency, Region III**

Chairman Lynch, Representative Norton, and Members of the Committee, I am Bill Early, Acting Regional Administrator for EPA Region III which includes the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this hearing.

With me today is Steven Hirsh, a Senior Remedial Project Manager assigned to the Spring Valley Site (Site) cleanup. Steve worked on this project from 1993 until 1995, and then returned in the fall of 2002 and has since served as the EPA lead for technical review of work performed by the Army.

I am here to provide the Committee with EPA's perspective on the ongoing efforts to clean up the formerly used defense site (FUDS) in the Spring Valley neighborhood of the District, and to address current issues which are of concern to this Committee and the public.

EPA has been providing technical support to the U.S. Army for its work at the Spring Valley Site since the initial discovery of munitions in 1993. Because the area is categorized as a FUDS, the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has been, and continues to be, the Federal agency with responsibility for the cleanup.

The EPA, the Corps, and the District of Columbia developed a partnership management team (Partnership) to work together on the Spring Valley cleanup. This Partnership continues to function effectively, with each Partner's organization maintaining its respective role and mission in the cleanup of the Site. EPA's participation at the Spring Valley Site has been and continues to be significant. EPA has expended over \$2.6 million dollars conducting technical support activities at the Site. EPA has brought expertise and capabilities which the other Partners either do not possess or were not able to employ in a timely manner. Significant

support provided by EPA includes the initial photo analysis that identified points of interest, sampling of groundwater, soil sampling, and the investigation of other potential sites in the District related to the Army World War I activities. EPA's data analysis established the background level of arsenic in soil.

EPA has extensive experience in cleaning up contaminated soils in residential areas at numerous sites across the country. Contaminants of concern at these sites include a variety of hazardous substances including arsenic. The technical issues presented by Spring Valley soil contamination may be challenging but they are not unique.

The investigation and cleanup work at the Site has progressed steadily over the years, addressing three primary areas of concern: arsenic contamination in soils; buried munitions and disposal pits; and potential ground water contamination. However, there are many tasks yet to be completed. The Partners have developed their priorities, with community and other stakeholder input, with the goals of investigating contamination and eliminating unacceptable risk to human health and the environment in Spring Valley.

The Partners developed a schedule for completion of cleanup tasks at the Spring Valley Site which allows the Partners to plan and allocate resources. All significant cleanup areas requiring investigation and cleanup have a project management schedule. The current schedule for the Site anticipates completion of most field work by the end of 2010. This projection has been made based on what is known at this time. It is possible, perhaps likely, that groundwater activities will continue beyond 2010, but from the perspective of residents, after that point, the presence of the Corps and its contractors in the neighborhood will be minimal. The Partners' Spring Valley cleanup schedule is a living document which has been amended as necessary over the years based on Site conditions and the discovery of new information.

As you have heard from the Corps, removal of soil contaminated with arsenic from residential properties is almost complete. A small number of homes not previously sampled are still being sampled. Based on those results, there may be a need to remediate additional properties. The residential work should be completed in 2009. Remediation of other properties, including land owned by the District or the Federal Government, is planned for completion in 2010.

Associated with the contaminated soil removal program is the issuance of letters to the residents. These letters are signed by Senior Management at the EPA

and the District of Columbia Department of Environment (DDOE) to explain to homeowners that all necessary contaminated soil removal actions have been completed on their properties. The letters are important to homeowners, particularly when real estate transactions occur. The Partners have agreed to give priority to ensuring that each homeowner affected will receive a letter as soon as possible after the work on their property is completed.

Currently, the Corps is conducting geophysical surveys of a large number of properties to investigate the possibility of buried munitions and other remnants of the Army activities during World War I. The Partners are continually evaluating the results of the geophysical surveys and working with the Corps to plan follow-up intrusive investigations. Unlike the arsenic sampling program, geophysics is not planned for every property at the Site. The decision to survey any property is based on factors including real estate records and historical information, including old aerial photography. The Corps, EPA and the DDOE have agreed upon a method to determine which properties will be geophysically investigated. Each year, based upon this method, the Partners jointly develop a list of properties for geophysical investigation. The Partners then evaluate the geophysical data and determine what the next steps will be for each property. Differences in opinion are discussed and resolved. Results of these evaluations are incorporated into a memo signed by all the Partners. The Partners anticipate that residential geophysical and follow-up investigations will be completed in 2010.

The groundwater investigation is continuing. This year, the Corps will be installing additional shallow wells. In addition, to better understand the nature and extent of perchlorate and other chemicals in groundwater, the Corps is planning to install deep monitoring wells, something not previously done at the Spring Valley Site. The Corps has proposed to use a new technology for construction of these wells.

In addition, the Corps is planning to perform special, state-of-the-art isotopic analysis of groundwater contaminated with perchlorate. The analysis may help us understand the source of the perchlorate. There are two known areas of perchlorate-contaminated groundwater: one near the American University, and a second near Sibley Hospital and the Dalecarlia Reservoir. If the contamination found near the Dalecarlia Reservoir is from the same source as the contamination found in wells at or near the American University, we will know there is a connection between the two areas and develop plans to understand that connection.

Also, as you have heard, the Corps is proceeding with plans for the destruction of chemical munitions recovered from the Glenbrook Road munitions burial site also known as Pit 3. The Explosive Destruction System (EDS) selected for use at the site has been used successfully at this Site and at other sites located within EPA Region 3, including the Dover Air Force Base and the Aberdeen Proving Ground. Prior to its use in the United States, Region 3 staff had the opportunity to observe testing of the EDS at a site in England. During that testing, and during all the deployments in EPA Region III, the EDS has performed without any incident or accident. EPA has requested that the Corps provide additional air monitoring outside the EDS containment structure during operations, and an assurance that EDS operations would only occur when weather conditions were appropriate. That will ensure any release would be confined to Federal property. The Corps has agreed to these requests.

Lastly, I want to address the issue of community involvement in the Spring Valley cleanup. As you have heard, the Partners hold a large number of regularly scheduled meetings. The Corps, EPA, and DDOE are always available to talk to or meet with residents on an individual basis. Documents are available to the public on a Spring Valley project web site maintained by the Corps and at the Administrative Record location, the Palisades library.
(<http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm>)

The Site is being investigated and remediated in accordance with the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP), so there are specific processes the Corps will follow in developing documentation that presents the findings of all the previous cleanup activities and assessments in a single document. There is a public and stakeholder involvement component to this process as well.

As required by the NCP, the Corps intends to prepare a Remedial Investigation report. This document will summarize all sampling that has been performed, all cleanup actions taken at the Site, and include a baseline human health and environmental risk assessment. The risk assessment is a key document in determining if all necessary cleanup actions have been conducted, or what additional cleanup actions need to be completed to address unacceptable risk. The document will be available for public review. A Proposed Remedial Action Plan will be developed to inform the public what additional actions the government feels are appropriate at the Site, list options for any necessary future actions, and provide a summary of the residual risks at the Site. A public comment period will be established. During the comment period, one or more public meetings will be

scheduled. Written responses to comments will be prepared. We will continue to work closely with the public, stakeholders, and any other interested parties during this period.

In closing, EPA believes that the Spring Valley cleanup is progressing in a positive manner. Community and stakeholder concerns are heard and are being addressed.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Committee. We would be happy to answer any questions.