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Investigation into contamination continues in area of former missile site

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and testing team request right-of-way for field activities

YORK -- The Atlas Missile Site 10, five miles west of York, was taken out of operation in 1964, only four years after its construction. What was left behind, however besides an empty silo, is groundwater contamination.

Several years ago, the investigation by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers began with a remedial investigation and feasibility study completed in 2002. Their findings -- Trichloroethene (TCE), a chlorinated solvent, was used at the site as a degreaser to clean out the residual fuel in the fuel lines. The release of TCE to the environment during the operation of the missile silo has resulted in TCE concentrations in groundwater that exceed the regulatory standard for protection of drinking water.

The study concluded the TCE impacts are located in groundwater beneath the missile silo and adjacent agricultural fields, and that no domestic water wells or municipal water wells are known to be impacted by TCE. However, approximately 21 private wells were recently tested by the Kemron Team (hired by the Corps), and they have asked for permission from the county board for right-of-way along Road J and Road K, near their intersections with Highway 34, in order to test for the spread of further contamination.

John Shonfelt, senior project manager, explained to the board that they are wanting to take samples in this particular area because of the general flow of the groundwater.

The Kemron Team will be working periodically at the site for at least the next five years, with the intention of cleaning up the contamination.

The county board granted the right-of-way permission, for Kemron to drill borings in that area. Findings from the study will be presented to the county board, as soon as they are available, as well as the private property owners who are impacted.

Full scale groundwater clean-up is planned to begin in 2006. The method of doing so will be determined, after this investigation period.