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TCE present in groundwater other than at Belvoir Ranch

PCE/TCE at high levels within City, too!

by **Dave Featherly**

By now, almost everyone in Laramie County is aware of the presence of trichloroethylene (TCE) in the groundwater under the Belvoir Ranch.

The mayor and selected councilmen, in spite of the levels far in excess of what is considered safe in drinking water, decided to require the Board of Public Utilities to pony up prepaid hook-up fees large developers had paid and, together, buy the 17,000 acres known as the Belvoir Ranch.

The ranch's western boundary runs almost to Harriman Road and the northern boundary is nearly to Interstate 80.

The other stated reason to purchase the land of granite and larkspur was to place a new landfill out there. The Department of Environmental Quality made it known that it would be difficult to gain a permit for such a dumpsite - at least that the same concern that faces the City today at its Happy Jack landfill would be present on the Belvoir - because the new dump would be upgradient of city public drinking water supply.

Well before the City bought the ranchland, the Army Corps of Engineers completed its first sampling on the Belvoir. They put down nine sample wells in May, 2003 and seven of them were positive for TCE. Five of the wells tested far in excess of the level that is considered "safe" in drinking water. That level is 5 parts per billion (ppb). Four tested 155, 521, 379, 106 ppb - and one was an astronomical 3660 ppb!

Those nine monitoring wells were drilled at the launch sites - there were three launch sites - or very near. Three of the wells came up with Non-Detect (ND) levels and the other was 2.7 ppb.

Two of the three ND's did test positive for TCE in subsequent tests, either in November of 2003 or January of 2005.

In January 2005, the Corps conducted another round of sampling. Those samples were taken from some of the same wells as in May of 2003, but there

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were twelve new locations and two sites identified as "Cow Camp" and "Finnerty." Cow Camp is identified as a residential well and is several miles east of the former missile site. The level of TCE present at that location was 17.9 ppb - three and a half times the safe level for drinking.

Most of the sampling still being done is in very close proximity to the three former launch sites. The interior of the ranch property and the east end have had very limited test results. Perhaps it has something to do with identifying the source of the contamination and what remediation will be required of the federal government. But TCE has migrated east and southeast of the missile sites and that is where stock and private wells are located.

It has now been determined by the Cheyenne Herald that contamination of groundwater also exists within the City.

That contamination generally takes the form of PCE (perchloroethylene or tetrachloroethane), which is the precursor to TCE and DCE (dichloroethylene) and breaks down to TCE. The PCE source is very often dry cleaning products used in businesses in an area.

Within the city are at least four sites which have the existence of PCE or TCE, or both. While there may be minimal public health risks due to the presence of these

"probable human carcinogens," they should not be ignored.

The land on which the current Safeway store on Pioneer sits has shown the presence of PCE levels of 238 ppb - at the corner of Pioneer and 25th Street. Near the corner of O'Neil and 26th Street, the PCE level was 18 ppb. Both of these levels far exceed the MCL (maximum contaminant level) acceptable in drinking water. The results came from a May 2003 sampling at each of the corners of the proposed new store site. The groundwater came from shallow levels and pose no risk to city water supplies. The water flow from this location should be south.

Another site with PCE contamination is the State of Wyoming motor pool on 19th Street and Bent Avenue. The PCE level there in 2001 was 1700 ppb. Again, far in excess of the MCL. The water flow from this location should also be south.

There should be no private wells in the vicinity of either of the above sites but, if there are, water should not be consumed by humans from such a water supply.

A third site within the boundaries of the

City is at the Wyoming Air National Guard grounds on Dell Range, east of Yellowstone.

TCE levels on that parcel are less than 50 ppb but the water flows to the north there and poses the only threat to neighbors from migration of the TCE into the neighborhoods north of Dell Range.

The downtown locations are in the commercial or industrialized area of the west end of Cheyenne and are less likely to reach residential areas, albeit there are some residences nearby.

The fourth area of contamination is the former UP depot building. A tanker spill there contaminated the groundwater and has been in the process of clean-up for some time. Vulcan Chemical, manufacturer of the contaminant, is handling the clean-up and it progresses at this time.

The risk from both TCE and PCE comes not only from drinking water contaminated with it, but also from inhalation.

That is the general concern about the depot building. Now occupied with offices and other public-access areas, including a museum of sorts, monitoring of air quality is an ongoing requirement.

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Because of recent work on the depot and remodeling activities, have tests for air quality been curtailed? Should it matter? Who is liable if the contamination someday presents health problems?

In the next Cheyenne Herald ...

What happened to the landfill money? How did the funds available to close the current landfill and site a new one deteriorate from more than \$10 million to about \$2.4 million? Where did it go? The June 30, 2004 audit showed \$5,867,444 Ending Balance for "Landfill closure and post-closure costs."

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