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JAN 31 2019

HORSHAM WATER AND
SEWER AUTHORITY

Navy officials provide update on Warminster chemical contamination

By Kyle Bagenstose

Posted Jan 30, 2019 at 4:06 PM

Updated Jan 30, 2019 at 4:06 PM

The Navy is still in the midst of an extensive investigation of PFAS chemical contamination at the former Naval Air Warfare Center in Warminster, with no timeline for when cleanup work would begin, department officials said at a Wednesday morning meeting.

The Navy has long hosted regular review meetings for the NAWC, which closed in 1996 and has since largely been converted to the Warminster Community Park and Ann's Choice Retirement Community. However, the site still is listed as a Superfund cleanup site and the Navy is responsible for continuing to monitor and clean various chemical contaminations.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, were added to the list after they were first discovered in nearby drinking water supplies in 2014. And while the Navy said Wednesday it has since spent more than \$14 million to provide filters and clean water to the Warminster Municipal Authority, it has not yet engaged in robust environmental cleanup. The chemicals were ingredients of firefighting foams used at the former base.

Navy officials spent much of the meeting relaying the results of ongoing PFAS investigations at the site, which has included exploratory sampling of groundwater, soil and streams leaving the site over the past three years. Deep into the Navy's presentation, Tim Hagey, manager of the Warminster Municipal Authority, interrupted to ask about the big picture.

"We know the entire Warminster township area is contaminated ... What's the end goal?" Hagey asked. "To do a proper cleanup, or just find out the extent of the pollution?"

William Lin, environmental coordinator for the Navy, responded the department is still in the earlier stages of its work.

"In general, right now the Navy is investigating the sources and the migration pathways (of PFAS)," Lin said. "We recognize that there are no regulatory standards (for PFAS) at this time, but we are trying to understand how it's migrating."

Andrew Barton, a project manager with Navy environmental contractor Battelle, relayed the investigative work that had been done to date. He said it included the sampling of surface water and sediment in 2016, sampling of soil and groundwater from existing monitoring wells in the area in 2017, and additional soil and groundwater well sampling and installation in 2018.

"(The base) is on an elevated plateau, so water will pretty much discharge in every direction," Barton said.

The work is building toward the expected completion of a "draft phase 1" investigation report in late spring. A phase II investigation would then be initiated later in 2019. Typically, the military issues final investigation reports before creating a "record of decision" in which it selects a cleanup solution. Then the cleanup solution must be designed, implemented, monitored, and eventually, completed.

But the pace at which the Navy and Air National Guard have moved through the PFAS investigation process, particularly at NAS-JRB Willow Grove and the Horsham Air Guard Station to the west of Warminster, have increasingly irked residents, as well as state and local officials.

Lin added Wednesday that the Willow Grove site is participating in Department of Defense and academic research projects with the goal of testing cleanup technologies for PFAS. The chemicals are notoriously difficult to destroy due to their chemical properties.

In lieu of better technology, PFAS is typically removed by large filtration units containing granular activated carbon. Navy officials said they had already activated a number of old supply and monitoring wells at NAWC Warminster and are filtering groundwater with carbon, a step that has not been taken at the Willow Grove site. The Pennsylvania Department

of Environmental Protection has also required the Navy to meet a 70-ppt discharge limit for other treated water at the site, Lin said.

But Hagey said following the meeting that water flow from all of the Navy's filtration wells add up to less daily filtration than what is achieved by just one of the municipal authority's supply wells. The authority recently finished installation of carbon filters on four highly contaminated wells. The authority has a zero-detect policy for the chemicals in its drinking water: one of the wells is not used, while three of them are used to supply water only when tests show they contain no detectable amounts of the chemicals.

"That's nothing," Hagey said of the 200,000 gallons the Navy is treating a day. "Let's be honest about that."

Jennifer Good, a remedial project manager for the Navy, said the department may ultimately choose to install additional pump-and-treat systems.

"If the investigation and the results show that it's feasible to install additional extraction wells in more targeted areas, we might do that," Good said.

Navy officials said Wednesday that they do not plan to excavate any contaminated soils from the Warminster base, as they are doing at Willow Grove. They said PFAS levels in the soil did not reach those found in Willow Grove, but that the actual numbers would not be available until the spring report is released.

A major point of contention at the meeting was contamination in the Hartsville area, which straddles the Warminster and Warwick township line. As previously reported, numerous homes in the area have been found to contain high levels of the chemicals, but residents have been stuck in limbo for several years as the military has yet to claim responsibility.

Lin said about half a dozen homeowners still are being provided bottled water while investigations into a potential source continue. Officials said that involves the Environmental Protection Agency sampling soil at the Hartsville Fire Station; an EPA official said Wednesday the samples have been taken but not yet returned.

"The source of the contamination is unknown," Lin said. "The Navy can't spend funds unless we're clearly shown as the source."

Kyle Seckinger, Warwick township manager, said he'd written in early January to the EPA to ask if the agency concurred with the military that it might not be the source, and also to the DEP for assistance, but had not yet heard back.

"We're going over three years now that these people are on bottled water," Seckinger said of the Hartsville residents. "I don't think they care where the source is."

Seckinger pressed Lin several times on who in the Navy actually made the decision that the homes would not be connected to public water. Lin demurred to offer one, but said he would pass along the concerns to those above him.

"I don't have a name for you right now," Lin said.