

7-SEP-81

Efforts underway to ensure safe drinking water

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second in a three-part series about drinking water in the Camp Lejeune/New River system, and examines the base's efforts to provide safe drinking water.

By Cpl. Dave Mundy

The discovery of hazardous waste sites at Camp Lejeune during testing from 1982-84 brought about the immediate closure of eight wells from which drinking water was drawn.



Base officials are exploring ways to clean up the sites and monitoring other existing wells as they wrap up Phase II of the Installation Restoration Program. DoD's program for identifying and cleaning up past hazardous waste storage or dumping sites.

Phase II of the IRP consists of conducting feasibility studies at sites located during the 1982-84 tests, determining the cleanup method and continuing testing.

See Water, Page 4A

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Agreement between the Marine Corps/Navy, the state and the EPA right now," said B.W. Elston, deputy assistant chief of staff, facilities, MCB. The agreement will coordinate how all interested parties will approach the cleanup effort. "With that agreement, we will be on-line to start Phase III, which is developing the technology and actually doing the cleanup."

Closing and moving the fuel farm in the Hadnot Point Industrial Area will be one of the base's top priorities, Elston said.

"Fuel leaks over the years at the fuel farm have resulted in a plume of fuel underneath the farm that threatens our ground water in that area," Elston said. "Closing and moving the fuel farm has been a top priority. We are already taking measures to clean the site up."

The only holdup has been in obtaining funding.

"We plan to close that fuel farm as soon as we can get an alternate or temporary fuel farm on line," Elston added. "We are awaiting urgent construction funds from HQMC to build a new facility."

The Hadnot Point Industrial Area remains the base's biggest environmental concern. Elston said if the area is ranked on the EPA's National Priorities Listing, funds will be made available through the Defense Environmental Restoration Account for the cleanup.

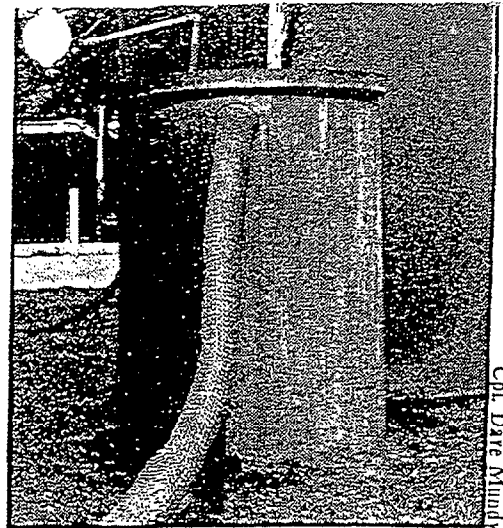
Some corrective action is already being taken at the old gas station in Tarawa Terrace.

"Right now, we have a system operating in Tarawa Terrace, where a pump is taking water from underground and separating contaminants," base Environmental Engineer Elizabeth Betz said. "But it's something that will take a long time to fix."

The housing area and Camp Johnson are now served by a permanent water line from the Hadnot Point treatment facility.

In addition, the base is continuing regular monitoring of the drinking water system.

"New state regulations have come out mandating tests every five years unless a system is classified as 'vulnerable,' in which case testing is done every three years," Betz said. "We generally run tests



Cpl. Dave Munn

CLEANUP UNDERWAY— A pump and filter operate near the commissary in the Tarawa Terrace housing area, separating contaminants from groundwater. The housing area's water is supplied via a permanent line from the main water treatment plant on Holcomb Boulevard.

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Results of testing in March indicate the quality of drinking water at Camp Lejeune/New River is well within state and federal standards under the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1983. The check for 36 potential contaminants produced no significant negative findings.

"We met all the limits set forth in the Safe Drinking Water Act," Betz noted. "As a matter of fact, nothing was found above detection levels. The technology we have now can detect up to a half-part per billion, which is pretty minute."

The tests also sought chemicals classified as "unregulated" by the EPA — compounds for which the agency has not yet set acceptable limits.

"They didn't show up within detection parameters either," Betz said.

Tests are conducted by both base personnel and outside agencies.

"We do a lot of the bacteria tests on-base, some of them on a weekly basis," Betz said. "For the tests that are required only every few years, we generally contract them out to outside laboratories."

Having identified the trouble spots and taken action to protect the drinking water supply on an immediate basis, base officials are now preparing to start the process of cleaning up contaminated sites

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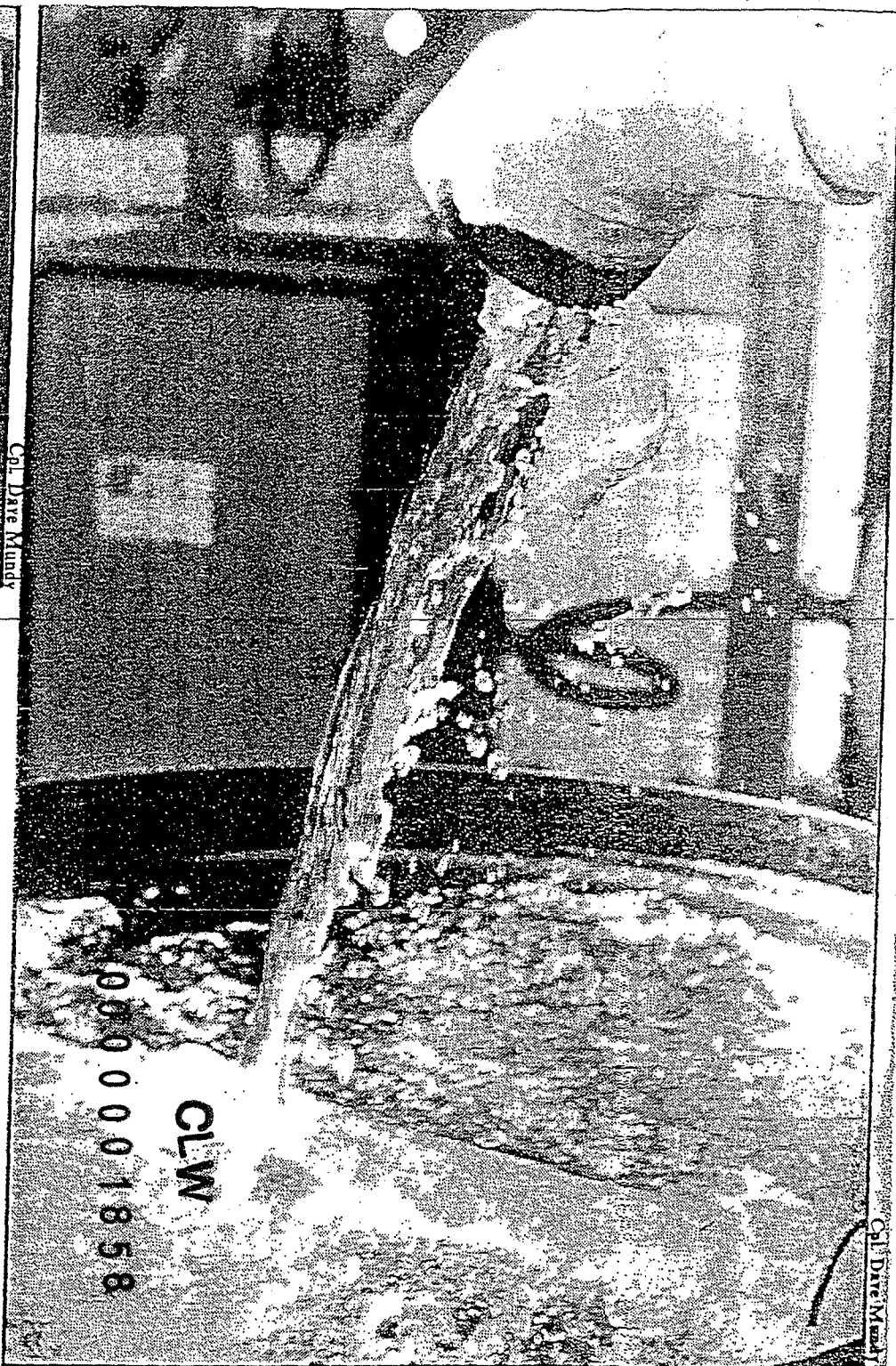
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CLEANUP CONTINUES— A pump and filter system is now operating in the Tarawa Terrace area to separate contaminants from groundwater. The groundwater was contaminated by chemicals from a dry cleaning business in Jacksonville.

that could still threaten the Lejeune/New River water system.

"Part of Phase III is developing the technology to clean up the contaminants," Elston said. "It's not an easy task to get these chemicals out of the soil and water and dispose of them safely. It will be a long, expensive process."

NEXT: Cleanup and prevention of future contamination

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