Results of Koppers tests are a surprise

By JEFF ADELSON
Sun staff writer

New test results from the Koppers Superfund site show a high concentration of contaminants deep below the property, prompting calls for more testing from both the company responsible for the cleanup and Gainesville Regional Utilities.

A well in the northwest section of the NW 23rd Avenue property shows cancer-causing naphthalene at 46 times the concentration that mandates a cleanup under state law.

Experts with Beazer East, the Pittsburgh-based company responsible for the site, and GRU said the test results are unexpected because they show contamination spreading in a direction not shown in models.

Heavy contamination was expected in the northeastern areas of the Koppers property

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Koppers
The site is Gainesville's only federally regulated waste site.

KOPPERS: Beazer, GRU differ on implications

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along the path groundwater is believed to flow as it travels the two miles to the Murphree Wellfields, which provide GRU customers with drinking water.

In addition, the testing showed contamination was worst at the deepest levels sampled, contrary to expectations that more toxins would be found at more shallow levels.

But Beazer and GRU disagreed about the implications of the testing.

"We don't see this as being indicative that we've got any potential threat to the Murphree Wellfields," said Beazer Environmental Manager Michael Slenska, who urged caution as clean up on the site moves forward.

While he said new wells should be dug, he particularly warned against digging them deeper because the holes could provide openings for contamination to spread further.

"We can do some well-intentioned things that can make things worse," Slenska said.

GRU officials said the findings support their arguments that Beazer must do more studies to determine how water travels under the site.

"It's well-established that there is significant contamination in the Floridan Aquifer," said GRU Senior Water/Wastewater Engineer Rick Hutton, referring to the underground supply of water that feeds the well fields. "Beazer needs to take steps to make sure it stays (on the site) and does not threaten the well fields."

Jeff Adelson can be reached at 352-374-5095 or adelsoj@gvillesun.com

1658 - Gainesville Sun, Tuesday 4-4-06 Murphree Article of Results of Koppers site well sampling Results, 4-4-06

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