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Vested interests

The ongoing conflict between Gainesville Regional Utilities and Beazer East over the extent and seriousness of the contamination under the Koppers Superfund site off N. Main Street and NW 23rd Avenue is essentially a clash of vested interests.

Beazer East is the out-of-state company that bears financial responsibility for whatever remediation is ultimately deemed necessary at Koppers. It has a vested interest in protecting its corporate bottom line.

GRU is the utility company that is responsible for delivering clean drinking water to tens of thousands of Gainesville area residents. It has a vested interest in making sure that no contamination from Koppers ever reaches the city's wellfield 2.5 miles distant.

As consumers of the local drinking water, we think GRU's vested interest is more compelling. Thus, we are inclined to give more credence to GRU's predictions than those of the company that may end up having to foot the bill.

That GRU and Beazer East are once again at loggerheads is no surprise. GRU's experts think contamination from Koppers could reach the city wellfield in a matter of years. Beazer's models predict that the contamination will degrade naturally long before it threatens the water supply. This is the same company, of course, that dismissed as unnecessary GRU's insistence on sinking additional monitoring wells to track the contamination.

The Environmental Protection Agency agreed with GRU on the question of monitoring. We trust EPA will similarly agree with GRU's concerns that Beazer's modeling does not accurately predict the extent and concentration of the Koppers contamination.

Gainesville water consumers can't afford the fiscal or public health consequences if GRU turns out to be right and Beazer wrong.
