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EPA reiterates Koppers site well demands

The back-and-forth rhetoric over the Koppers Superfund site has some project neighbors, utility officials and others saying enough is enough.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a letter Thursday to Beazer East reiterating its order that the Pittsburgh-based company drill monitoring wells according to agency demands.

The EPA and Gainesville Regional Utilities want 12 wells drilled to test groundwater under the site, but Beazer has balked about some well locations and drilling methods. The letter sets up the possibility that Beazer and the EPA will meet to resolve the controversy.

GRU officials and attorneys will fly to Atlanta Tuesday and also meet with the EPA, said Kim Zoltek, the utility's director of water and wastewater engineering.

"If Beazer is not cooperating . . . we want to know what our options are," she said.

The company is legally responsible for cleaning the site of creosote, a cancer-causing mix of chemicals used to treat wood. GRU says monitoring wells will show whether contamination on the property, at Main Street and NW 23rd Avenue in Gainesville, threatens the city's drinking water supply.

Beazer officials declined comment on the EPA letter.

Some project neighbors and activists say the company has unnecessarily delayed the cleanup with the debate over drilling.

"It's just something . . . to keep them from doing what they need to do," said Farinda Osteen, 59, whose home borders the site.

Osteen is within earshot of the drilling, which she says is a source of aggravation. She hopes the drilling will be done soon so the cleanup can begin.

Beazer last week started drilling some wells on the site, but one environmental activist said she's disappointed more isn't being done.

"This has been going on for years and years and now they're talking about monitoring," said Gladys Lane of Gainesville's Women for Wise Growth.

Lane said the group has been meeting to devise ways to build public pressure on Beazer to stop debates that delay cleaning the site. She said they're frustrated the site was put in the Superfund cleanup program in 1983 and major cleanup work still hasn't occurred.

"We're just concerned that once everything quiets down, nothing's going to be done again," she said.

GRU officials said they hope they can get initial results in a matter of weeks showing whether the Floridan aquifer is significantly contaminated. Lane said she worries that will only be followed with more delays and debate.

"If the monitoring wells show contamination, where do we go from here?" she said.
