Activist cites water worry

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Clean tap water is a necessity most people take for granted.

Taking a hot shower, washing dishes and clothes and having water to drinkare everyday tasks most people don't stop to think about.

But Daniel Parshley isn't most people.

As director of the Glynn Environmental Coalition, Parshley, who considers himself an advocate for Glynn County's natural resources, is particularly worried about contamination of a pool of water in the Miocene Aquifer - a groundwater source located hundreds of feet above the Floridan Aquifer, which supplies much of Glynn County's drinking water.

The good news is the water contamination, located directly beneath the old LCP industrial site, a U.S. Superfund site on Ross Road in Glynn County, just north of the city line, is confined within a closed reservoir. The bad news, Parshley said, is that it's getting worse.

The contamination plume, stemming from a caustic brine pool located underground, includes mercury, lead and other chemicals. And the plume is growing, Parshley said.

"It's like pouring syrup into water," he said. "It's alarming to have the leak, and as it spreads, it's more and more water we can't use."

Although the mercury contamination is posing no immediate threat to those tapping into the Miocene or Floridan aquifers because it's contained within its own well, Parshley said if the chemicals were to somehow spread outward, it would spell disaster.

"If this (contamination) was to get loose, it would ruin our water for thousands of years," Parshley said. "And the longer it goes untreated, the more expensive it is to clean."

And don't be quick to peg Parshley as an extremist on a soapbox. Surveys of the site by the state Environmental Protection Division and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have revealed elevated levels of mercury, lead and polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, at the plant site and in nearby water and organic life.

Shea Jones, EPA project manager in charge of monitoring the LCP site cleanup, knows there's a problem, too.

"This caustic brine pool is dense, it's heavy and we want to slow the downward movement of it," Jones said.

Like Parshley, Jones was quick to note that the water contamination is contained within the boundaries of the LCP property, but immediate action is needed to prevent further problems.

"It's a technically complex situation," Jones said.

But help is on the way, she said. According to the EPA's action plan, clean-up should begin as soon as October. It may take anywhere from 18 months to three years to finish, she said.

And although the extent of soil and water contamination at the LCP site has often been shrouded in a veil of mystery to residents in surrounding neighborhoods, Jones said the EPA is dedicated to explaining exactly what is going to happen.

"Before we go out into the field, we will have a public meeting to let the community know what we'll be doing and give them a chance to talk about it," she said.