LCP Chemicals Site Mercury/Caustic Brine Pool Receiving EPA Attention

June 2005

Below ground and out of sight, mercury, chromium and arsenic are sitting in a pool of caustic brine that continues to leak into Glynn County's drinking water aquifer below the LCP Chemicals Superfund Site. The EPA calls this area the Caustic Brine Pool, which is located where the production buildings once stood. Mercury, metals, and caustic brine are leaking through the confining layer protecting the drinking water aquifer. The leakage is thought to have been caused by the underground pool of caustic brine. With a pH of around 13, it is suspected that the confining layer was dissolved by the caustic brine or otherwise made porous. In areas where mercury levels are rising in groundwater, the pH is also rising. Sampling results from 1999 through 2003 indicate the problem is getting worse.

At the June 23, 2005, public meeting, the EPA said they are trying to get an agreement with the Responsible Parties to propose a plan to fix the problem. The EPA's plan is to draft legal agreements, negotiate with the polluters, and then look at proposals about how to fix the problem. Meanwhile, the contamination of drinking water resources worsens. No date or timeline has been set to address this serious threat to water resources.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA-EPD) estimates that there are about 300,000 pounds of mercury sitting above the leak into the drinking water aquifer, and has proposed prompt action. At a minimum, the GA-EPD wants enough water pumped from the area above the leak to prevent further contamination of drinking water.

Both mercury and caustic brine freely leaked during operations at the LCP Chemicals Site and dissolved the soil under the production buildings. Buildings actually had to be propped up for safety before they could be disassembled. Damage to the buildings was seen as they cracked and settled. Damage to our drinking water resources will continue out of sight until action is taken to fix the problem.