

Pollutants found at UMore Park, further assessments needed

Friday, 25 July 2008

by Jessica Harper

Thisweek Newspapers

The U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers has finished its environmental inspections of UMore Park and has concluded that the site will need further assessments to determine the extent of contamination at the former Gopher Ordnance, an ammunitions facility constructed and taken down near the end of World War II.

“There was nothing completely unexpected,” said Dave Scheer, a hydro-geologist for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, which has overseen the inspections. “Everyone is aware of the industrial activities that had potential to leave contamination.”

The University of Minnesota ordered the review as it plans that UMore Park will be developed into a community of 20,000-30,000 residents supporting housing, businesses and civic areas.

The initial inspections found PAHs, arsenic, lead, mercury and naphthalene, a compound associated with diesel fuel in the soil and sediment.

Carcinogens such as chloroform, and toxins such as methylene chloride, which is commonly used in paint removal and metal degreasing, and 2-methylphenol benzene were found in ground water.

“Samples were collected in shallow ground water, so it’s not a risk to nearby drinking aquifers,” Scheer said.

The portion of the property near Highway 53 that formerly contained Gopher Ordnance’s only operating assembly line is the focus of the assessments, since it likely contains the highest levels of contaminants, he said.

“When we did the initial screening, we looked at what activities were at the location,” Scheer said. “At every step of the process of a plant, different chemicals are introduced.”

The next step is for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the property to determine the extent of contamination and whether these are detrimental to humans and/or the environment.

“The goal is to identify the most contaminated areas and find the best suitable plan to deal with the contamination,” Scheer said.

E-mail Jessica Harper at:

jessica.harper@ecm-inc.com