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## Proposed plan for UCD research site cleanup faces some public concern

### Department of Energy takes public comment on preferred cleanup plan

*Written by CAITLIN COBB**Published October 27, 2008*

The former Laboratory for Energy-Related Health Research at UC Davis has been a site of controversy for several years with regards to the potential contamination left in the soil on site.

Government officials presented a proposed final cleanup plan for the site at a public meeting Thursday.

The LEHR site is located approximately 1.5 miles south of the main UC Davis campus, and was previously used as an animal testing site for toxicity studies.

Many of the research activities at LEHR generated a variety of radiological wastes that were disposed of on site, according to a LEHR fact sheet.

"The primary research animals were beagle dogs," said Bob Devaney, co author of the Department of Energy proposed plan for remedial LEHR cleanup at the public information meeting. "The focus of the studies were the toxicity of radio isotopes and radiation."

The lab closed down in 1988 and the DOE moved into a process of decontaminating and cleaning out the buildings, Devaney said.

"A lot of what DOE has planned [in terms of cleanup] had to do with protection of groundwater," he said.

The groundwater contamination was likely caused by the ways in which the toxic chemicals were disposed of on site, Devaney said.

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"According to the practice at the time ... the site had on site disposal [areas] for chemical and radiological type waste," Devaney said. "It was mainly dried waste that was buried, and it was capped with low permeability soil."

This buried waste ultimately seeped into the ground and contaminated the site, he said.

UC Davis plans to work closely with the DOE to monitor the site and do any further cleanup of contamination that is needed, said Sue Fields, environmental protection manager with the Office of Environmental Health and Safety at UC Davis.

"We will have to manage and maintain the land use restrictions [of the site] because we are the landowner," Fields said.

UC Davis representatives involved in the cleanup have to develop their own alternatives to compliment the DOE's proposed plan, Fields said.

"We are working on our feasibility study," she said. "We are developing alternatives and developing costs for those [alternatives]."

The DOE's proposed plan includes a preferred alternative, labeled Alternative 2 that would include long term groundwater monitoring, contingency remediation and land-use restrictions, according to the LEHR proposed plan document.

What this plan would do is monitor the site and only go in and do further cleanup if the DOE deems it necessary. This means that some of the pollutants buried under ground soil will be left untouched. This plan would also restrict the land use to prevent the contaminants from spreading or resurfacing.

However, some local organizations have concerns about the DOE's preferred plan, and they voiced their opinions at the meeting. One organization whose members gave public comment at Thursday's meeting was the Davis South Campus Superfund Oversight Committee.

"The key issue to DSCSOC addressing DSCSOC concerns is how well the proposed plan is implemented during the time that residual wastes left in the soil at the LEHR site will be a threat to public health and the environment," said Julie Roth, executive director of DSCSOC.

The DSCSOC is concerned that the DOE's plan, which largely focuses on site monitoring, will not

be adequate to remove all potentially harmful pollutants, Roth said. While the site will be monitored, there may still be residual pollutants, as well as unrecognized pollutants left in the soil that could be a potential threat to offsite waters.

"Some of the pollutants that are proposed to be left at the site buried under surface soils will be a threat essentially forever," Roth said.

DOE representatives at the meeting did not respond to any public comment.

The DOE is interested in public opinions with regard to their proposed plan, and public comments will be taken until Nov. 17. Comments can be e-mailed to [LEHRPPcomments@lm.doe.gov](mailto:LEHRPPcomments@lm.doe.gov).

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