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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "ST MARYS WATER TAINING" NSB KINGS BAY GA  
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# Answers few il.

By Michelle Owens  
Staff writer

ST. MARYS, Ga. — When real estate agent Robin Donald bought her home in Crooked River Plantation, she didn't know an old unregulated county landfill was across the street on military property.

The Navy told Mrs. Donald and other families this week about the landfill because routine testing showed the 36-acre site could be contaminating their private water wells with a cancer-causing compound.

At a Thursday meeting conducted by Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base officials, Mrs. Donald and about 100 residents from the 600-home subdivision spent two hours venting frustrations. They also questioned city, Navy and environmental officials about the effects that possible groundwater

contamination would have on health, property values and water bills.

"Is that [contamination] going to bring our property values down?" Mrs. Donald asked St. Marys Mayor Jerry Brandon.

His answer: "It's hard to tell."

Because she sells real estate, Mrs. Donald said, she also wanted to know whether she's obliged to tell clients about the potential contamination.

"There's really no way for us to answer that question," said Capt. Len Scullion, commanding officer of the public works department at the Navy base near St. Marys.

Residents also were told that they would have to wait and see whether the St. Marys City Council would vote to give residents a break on water and sewer bills.

"I'm a little bit angry with our city," Mrs.

# St. Marys water tainting

Donald said after the meeting. "They didn't give me any answers tonight."

Navy and city officials couldn't answer many of the residents' questions because the contamination was revealed only recently and its extent is unknown.

What they do know is that so far, an area, or "plume," about 475 feet wide and up to 25 feet deep has tested positive for high levels of vinyl chloride, a by-product of some cleaning solvents.

The levels in the groundwater exceed U.S. Environmental Protection Agency drinking-water standards. St. Marys' and Kings Bay's drinking water is unaffected because it is supplied by a different, deeper aquifer.

The contaminated groundwater is beneath the old Camden County landfill, which closed in 1981, and flows toward the

subdivision.

So far, the contamination has been tracked to an area just outside the subdivision, along Georgia Spur 40.

About 18 other volatile compounds were found in the groundwater. Six were at or near EPA contamination levels, said Marland D. Dulaney Jr., a senior toxicologist contracted by the Navy to help testing.

Engineers are concerned mainly with the vinyl chloride because its levels were the highest.

Dulaney said that subdivision wells might be affected but that no one would know until well-water samples are tested.

The Navy has asked Crooked River residents for permission to test the wells and also cautioned them to stop using the wells until further notice. Pumping water could spread contamination or release the harm-

ful compound into the air.

Vinyl chloride — in its most common form — also is found in plastics and in cigar and cigarette smoke. It has been known to cause cancer in humans when inhaled in large amounts for an extended time.

Engineers assume that the landfill is causing the contamination because people were allowed to dump anything during the landfill's seven years of operation.

They also assume that residents could be exposed because the groundwater flows toward Crooked River Plantation.

The Navy hopes to begin getting answers in early October, when testing begins.

If contamination exists, environmental engineers will try to clean it up, which could take years, Navy officials said.

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