

# USFS search for poison continues in Nemo

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The United States Forest Service (USFS) is continuing its search for the source of contamination which was found last Fall to be in water wells in the Nemo area.

According to Joe Colwell of the USFS, there were eight wells drilled in March to check for the presence of Ethylene Dibromide (EDB), a dangerous chemical that can cause short term and long term health problems including death.

Any amount over 50 parts per trillion (ppt) of EDB in drinking water is considered to be harmful and of the eight wells drilled in March one test result showed 1,000 parts per trillion of the dangerous compound while another showed 121 ppt.

Continued monitoring of the "clean" wells will take place and another eight wells are scheduled to be drilled, according to a USFS newsletter sent out to effected residents.

Drilling the first set of wells was to have begun last week, but Colwell said he was not certain if the drilling began on schedule or if they were completed what any test of water showed as far as contamination.

Until wells show "clean" test results the water from them must be captured in 55 gal. drums.

Colwell explained that several types of "instant" filtration systems are being looked at to install on the wells so that the water will not have to be stored in drums.

The search for the location of the source point for the pollution has not been successful up to this point, he said.

When work by the contractor hired to locate and dispose of the metal cans or drums the EDB was thought to have been buried in was stopped last Fall no site had been located.

Use of a magnetometer in February led to the contractor identifying possible sites which were excavated in March, still without finding the expected barrels or cans of EDB.

One more site remains to be excavated and searched before mid-May but Colwell confirmed current thinking on the part of the USFS is that there may not have been any buried barrels or cans.

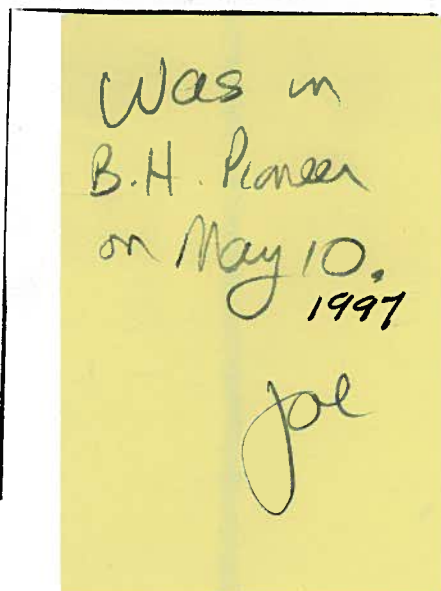
"Although the discovery of the source of contamination has been our highest priority, it is becoming a real possibility that there may be no buried source," according to the newsletter. "If nothing is discovered soon, we may have to assume the EDB was not buried in containers, but may have been poured into the ground."

"We are really confused at this time," said Colwell. "Eye witnesses led us to sites where magnetic testing was performed and we have pretty well hit all the areas people pointed out to us."

He said if no buried containers are found the next step might be making a "big grid" in the Nemo area and soil sampling to try and find a high concentration of EDB to locate the site where the chemical was poured.

"Then we can decide if we dig it up," he said. "Before we would start we would have to do some testing to see how big the area is and at what depth."

(Cont. on Page 6A)



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Page 6A, Saturday, May 10, 1997

## USFS search for poison . . . . .

(Cont. from Page 3A)

"I don't know if anything could be put in the ground to neutralize the EDB, it is just speculation at this point," he said.

He said no decision on a final solution for clean water for residents in the area has been arrived at and the three solutions of a common well, filtration of individual wells and filtering and treating water from the creek are still under consideration.

First, he said, testing has to take place with the monitoring wells where pumping and watching for reaction in other wells is measured to determine if there is the possibility of what are now clean wells and clean areas

becoming contaminated.

He said some testing was done in January to determine what faults run through the contaminated area and it appears at this time there is no migration through cracks to deeper aquifers in the area.

The other site of identified EDB contamination at the Harney Guard Station has resulted in the well being disconnected, said Colwell.

"We are hauling in water and that is how we are going to leave it for right now because our attention here (in Nemo) and there is not much money to do active clean-up there," said Colwell.

While private wells in the

area were tested it is not the "best scientific guess," said Colwell, that there will be any migration of contamination to those wells from the Harney Station well area.