

# Community Update

June 2005

St. Augustine, St. Johns County, Florida

## Florida DOH Analysis of Soil/Groundwater Tests for the Former Ponce de Leon Golf Course Site *Now Available*

### **The History of the Former Ponce de Leon Golf Course**

The 400-acre former Ponce de Leon Resort and Convention Center is on the eastern side of U.S. Highway 1, about one-half mile south of the St. Augustine Airport, in St. Augustine. Ponce Associates Limited Liability Company (LLC) owns the site. In the past, the property included an 18-hole golf course and associated buildings, a Radisson hotel and convention center, and wooded land. It also includes a St. Augustine city water treatment plant (within an easement) and condominiums. The site was a golf course from 1916 until 2003. The city of St. Augustine's planning and zoning board has approved the site owners' plans to redevelop most of the site into 749 residential properties.

### **Why the Florida Department of Health (DOH) Gets Involved**

Working with the county health departments, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) reviews test results of soil, water and air to determine if there are any public health risks at hazardous waste sites. A small team of six is tasked with this effort. We review information gathered by both the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) provides funding for this program. At this site, the Florida DEP requested Florida DOH review soil and groundwater test results.

### **What DOH Looks For During the Review**

DOH looks at sample results to see what levels of selected chemicals are at a site in the soil, water or air. From those levels, we determine if nearby residents are likely to get sick. The analysis considers how someone is exposed, how long they are exposed and to how much chemical they are exposed.

Chemicals must be present in certain amounts to cause illness. To determine if enough chemical is present to cause possible health risks, DOH uses ATSDR guidelines.

The ATSDR sets the guidelines at levels many times lower than the amount known to cause illness. The process provides a large margin of safety for the public. These guidelines were used to evaluate the Ponce de Leon samples.

### **What DOH has Done So Far at Ponce de Leon**

- Evaluated the soil, groundwater and pond sediment data gathered by the Florida DEP and the St. Johns County Health Department (CHD). The report looks at the arsenic found in site soil and groundwater.
- Requested more sampling for chemicals related to turf management, other than arsenic. These include: pesticides, herbicides, metals, nitrates and volatile organic compounds.

***DOH categorizes the site as an "indeterminate public health hazard," since the available data is incomplete for determining the public health threat from site contaminants.***

### **Former Ponce de Leon Golf Course Draft Health Assessment Report Findings**

DOH reviewed samples available from testing at the site to determine the public health threat from residential use in the future. Based on incomplete site sampling, DOH recommends no one use the contaminated shallow groundwater. We also recommend contaminated soil cleanup.

To review the data, DOH estimated that residents would be exposed daily to the highest measured arsenic levels on the site. These levels are not expected to cause non-cancer illness for adults. However, the soil *could pose an increased risk of illness for children having daily, long-term exposures*. Shallow groundwater is not currently used. However, DOH does not know if it was used in the past or if so, if it was contaminated at that time.

Future development plans show that cleanup levels for soil will likely meet residential standards for most areas of the site. The developer has proposed meeting commercial or industrial soil cleanup levels for limited areas. The owner is assessing the site contamination and planning site cleanup with DEP. The developer may use a number of ways to clean up the site. These could include:

- engineering controls
- soil remediation, and
- deed restrictions to make sure people living or working at the site are not exposed to contaminated soil, sediments, surface water or groundwater.

### **Former Ponce de Leon Golf Course Draft Health Assessment Report Recommendations**

DOH determined that the developer needs to characterize locations and levels of contaminants on the site. Surface water and groundwater on and near the site have mainly been tested for arsenic. However, they need to be tested for other turf management chemicals. Based on sampling at other golf courses, both surface and groundwater are likely to contain elevated levels of nitrates and other chemicals.

If the developer plans to mix clean soil with the contaminated soil as part of the cleanup for arsenic, DOH recommends that the mixed soil should also be tested for other turf management chemicals to make sure the soil meets residential soil cleanup target levels. This is especially true for areas with the greatest arsenic contamination. These areas most likely contain other turf management chemicals.

Sediment cleanup should also address all turf management chemicals used in the past. Testing should show the cleaned-up sediments meet state guidelines for all contaminants.

DOH recommends that developer should test specific areas of soil, groundwater and surface water for lead, antimony, volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, metals, pesticides, herbicides, nitrates and other turf management chemicals.

Currently, site access is not restricted, and persons might trespass on the site. However, DOH determined that no one would get sick from occasional site trespass.

Until site assessment and remediation are complete, DOH recommends:

1. People should avoid dust inhalation or hand-to-mouth contact with contaminated surface soil near areas of known arsenic contamination, and
2. Workers should control dust generation and monitor air quality for arsenic during any future clean up or remodeling activities, utilities installation, or construction or other work that would disturb soil or remove vegetation in areas with known or suspected arsenic contamination.

**For more information: Call DOH toll-free during regular business hours at (877) 798-2772.**

**Ask to speak to Connie Garrett or Lu Grimm.**

*The U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) funds 100% of Florida DOH activities at hazardous waste sites, including the cost of this document, approximately 9 cents per copy.*

***Please send any comments on the attached sheet.***

#### **What DOH Does:**

- ✓ *We focus on health.*
- ✓ *We conduct health consultations to answer a specific question about a site.*
- ✓ *We conduct public health assessments. These reports look at all the information we can find about a site.*
- ✓ *We inform and educate communities and local doctors about a site.*

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*For more information on DOH activities at hazardous waste sites in Florida, go to:*

[www.myfloridaeh.com/community/SUPERFUND/index.html](http://www.myfloridaeh.com/community/SUPERFUND/index.html)

