



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 4
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
61 FORSYTH STREET
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

AUG 15 2007

The Honorable Gene Green
U.S. House of Representatives
316 Ford House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Green:

Thank you for your request for additional information following the June 12, 2007, hearing before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations on contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune. I hope this information will be useful to you and the Members of the Subcommittee.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or the EPA Region 4 Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at (404) 562-8327.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. I. Palmer, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

J. I. Palmer, Jr.
Regional Administrator

cc: Chairman John D. Dingell

EPA Response to Questions for the Record
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

June 12, 2007 Hearing on Drinking Water Contamination at Camp Lejeune

1. Mr. Hill, what is average length of time to clean up a Superfund site?

The durations of hazardous substance site cleanups vary widely. Generally, sites owned or operated by the federal government require a longer time for remediation than non-federal sites because federal facility cleanups, on average, are more complex and contain a wider range of contaminants. Differences in the size and characteristics of a site and/or the nature of contamination can significantly prolong cleanups. Sites with simple contamination problems are among the cases of fast cleanups. In Region 4, there are 210 sites listed on the National Priorities List (NPL) of which 19 are federal facilities. There have been 45 non-federal sites deleted from the NPL. The average time of remediation at these sites is 11.4 years from NPL listing to deletion, with a range from 2.3 years to 23 years.

2. In your testimony, you indicate that Camp Lejeune was placed on the National Priorities List in 1991 and that final remediation is expected to occur in 2014. That would indicate to me that clean up of this site, if completed on time, will have taken 23 years to complete. Why has it taken so long to clean up the contamination in and around Camp Lejeune?

EPA projects that all the remedial systems will be in place and operational by 2014; however, that is not the date that cleanup will be achieved. Of the 46 sites related to Camp Lejeune, 28 sites have reached a no further action status by meeting their remediation goals. The remaining contaminated Camp Lejeune sites have been divided into 22 Operable Units (OU). Due to the logistical and resource constraints of investigating 22 OUs, schedules have been developed to prioritize the remediation effort to meet the long term cleanup goals. Final cleanup will not be recorded until the last OU has reached its cleanup goals.

There are several OUs with extensive groundwater contamination that require a longer remediation period. As groundwater is a predominant source of drinking water for many North Carolinians, we place a high premium on ensuring proper remediation. Pump and treat remedies are typically calculated using a standard 30-year timeframe. Additionally, site conditions in this area make groundwater cleanup a slow and difficult process and may take as long as 60 years. Although groundwater cleanup has not been achieved, remediation efforts have resulted in significant decreases in contaminant concentrations in many wells at Camp Lejeune and at a nearby Superfund site, ABC Cleaners. Currently, efforts are underway at Camp Lejeune to evaluate alternative treatment technologies to further decrease the time required to reach the remediation goals.

3. Has the clean-up process been prolonged by the joint agreement between the Environmental Protection Agency, the Navy, and the State of North Carolina?

No. Since the EPA, State, and Navy have a good working relationship, the joint partnership has resulted in an expedited schedule to reach final site cleanup.

At Camp Lejeune, the length of the cleanup process results primarily from the specific site conditions and the limitations of the available technologies to treat groundwater contamination. To date, 19 Records of Decision (ROD) have been signed, which equates to 30 sites, and reflects remedy selection at a rate of greater than one ROD per year. The remaining 16 sites are undergoing active investigations. Removal actions are also being utilized to reduce the contaminant mass during the investigation process, which will also decrease the timeframe to reach the cleanup goals.