

Persisting Pearce Creek problems

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After more than six months, the residents of the Pearce Creek communities have only about as many answers as when 2013 began.

Many of the 240 residents on the shores of Earleville live there year-round, and the lack of answers about the quality of their water, something many of us take for granted, must be almost maddening. Nearly seven months after the first residential well was tested, the results are just as frustrating.

On the surface, no immediate general conclusions can be drawn, i.e. this street or area tends to have good water while these areas do not. Instead, the “snapshot” readings found that water quality just a few homes apart can be dramatically different.

The tests do speak to the need for the residents' homeowner's associations to begin investigating private annual water quality testing if a public water system is not a part of the solution.

The Army Corps of Engineers told the Whig this week that it will soon be drilling four test wells to the Upper Patapsco Deep aquifer, the third deepest, to investigate its water quality. The Corps has previously said that drilling deeper residential wells should be an option on the table to rectify the drinking water issues if that aquifer is uncontaminated. Health department officials advised that drilling more than 200 new residential wells could compromise the aquifer if there currently is no break in the confining layer.

Homeowners everywhere should have their water tested for basic bacterial and mineral issues if they use a well for drinking water. Unfortunately for the Pearce Creek communities, it seems the Cecil County Health Department will not be able to monitor the area's wells for the extensive list of contaminants listed in January's U.S. Geological Survey report.

While we await the findings of the new wells, we hope the Corps will continue to investigate public water options, which would allow the community some peace of mind. Two options remain on the table this week: building a local water treatment plant or building a 7-mile pipeline from Cecilton to bring in treated water.

Each option would cost homeowners initially, but would also allow them to dismantle costly water treatment systems, eliminate system maintenance costs and provide better oversight of drinking water quality standards. Cecilton Mayor Joe Zang said Tuesday that the town and the Corps have met twice in the past month to discuss what would be needed for a pipeline, but the conversation has been mostly in “generalities” at this point.

All of these options are largely contingent on the approval of federal funding for construction, according to the Corps, which has seen its budget frozen like many other governmental entities during the shutdown. Currently, the Corps is still operating under a continuing resolution, which means only current projects are funded, and the \$6 million request for fiscal year 2014 for remediation has not yet been approved.

While surely disappointing that more answers have not been established so far, we think now is an ideal time to bring residents back in with Corps and county officials so that their voices may continue to be heard throughout the process.

After all, they have to drink the water.



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