

As Pearce Creek liner near completion, attention turns to water service

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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' progress on the installation of the Pearce Creek Dredge Material Containment Area liner is seen here in November. Officials now report it is nearly completed.

CECILTON — As the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers works to complete its geosynthetic liner installation at its Pearce Creek dredge disposal site, residents of the nearby communities are increasingly turning their attention to the installation of a public water service.

Since a 2013 U.S. Geological Survey study found contamination of local water tables in a cluster of Pearce Creek-area neighborhoods, state and federal stakeholders have been working toward providing potable water for residents and sealing the Pearce Creek Dredge Material Containment Area so that it could be reopened for dredge spoil disposal.

Jerry Jones, the Corps' C&D Canal project manager, who announced his retirement by the end of the year, reported Friday during a meeting of the Pearce Creek Implementation Committee that installation of the synthetic liner that will prevent leaching of future dredge spoils into local water tables is about 99 percent complete. Only a small area near a new sluice box has yet to be laid, and the Corps contractor, Sealaska, has begun to turn its attention to placing sediment on top of the installed liner.

Meanwhile, the Maryland Department of the Environment is currently reviewing a draft groundwater monitoring plan and has requested public input on it before it is expected to be approved before the end of the year. A discharge monitoring plan is still being worked on and is expected to be submitted in March or April. Those plans will ensure that the Corps' efforts to prevent future contamination are working and will be reviewed every year.

The Corps expects to receive a seasonal permit to begin dredge spoil disposal at Pearce Creek next fiscal year, which would run October 2017 to March 2018. Jones noted, based upon dredging results from this year that will be sent to the Corps' Poplar Island site, disposal likely won't begin until January 2018 though.

As the Corps' half of the Pearce Creek project begins to wind down, the attention of residents in the Bay View Estates, West View Shores and Sunset Pointe communities is increasingly turning to the progress on the water line being extended from Cecilton to serve them.

Chris Rogers, of Cecilton's contracted engineering firm AECOM, reported Friday that about 62 percent of the transmission project has been completed to date, but only a

small gap of transmission main remains to be laid on the route to the Pearce Creek area. The majority of remaining work would be some major facilities work, road restoration, landscaping and demobilization.

Meanwhile, about 36 percent of the distribution system has been completed, including the majority of Bay View Estates with work underway in West View Shores, Rogers said. Households are scheduled to begin being connected to the distribution system as early as this spring.

“We’re on schedule and making progress,” Rogers said. “We don’t plan on having any gap between availability of water and service to residents.”

As crews get closer to local water service, however, Rogers asked the communities for some leeway through winter months.

“Be patient with anything that may be a result of our project,” he said, noting that potholes and dust may be a byproduct of freezing temperatures.

A meeting is being planned for the spring to inform communities about future hookups and the process to complete each lot’s connection.

The only remaining hiccup in a complex project involving a variety of stakeholders is a half dozen residents who have explicitly refused access to contractors to complete the on-lot work. Officials reported Friday that state regulations will mandate the capping of all residential wells, including anyone who doesn’t comply with the project’s parameters.

If a resident doesn’t interconnect to the distribution system within one year of the project’s completion, a resident would be responsible for the \$6,000 hookup fee that the state is currently funding for all complying residents. A noncompliant resident would also likely be unable to obtain residential permits for their property or sell it until they came into compliance.