

WAYLAND

More contamination discovered

Carcinogens found in water at Raytheon site

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With evidence of a fresh source of ground water contamination at the old Raytheon Co. site, a new and perhaps lengthy chapter has opened up in the company's ongoing cleanup of its former Boston Post Road property.

Raytheon has spent the last several years addressing a host of contamination issues on its former 83-acre campus, but the detection of carcinogenic trichloroethylene, or TCEs, on the northern portion of the property near town conservation land could significantly alter the complexion of the cleanup effort.

At the urging of town officials and residents, the company earlier this year agreed to do more ground water testing around the site, which now houses a modern office park. Those tests, town officials say, turned out to confirm fears that previously undisclosed contamination was lingering on the environmentally sensitive property.

"It turned out to be the tip of the iceberg, and the concentrations in that area are an order of magnitude higher than anything that has been found before," said Andy Irwin, a member of the Way-

land Conservation Commission and a leading expert on the site.

A safe concentration of TCEs in a Zone 2 aquifer area — within which the Raytheon property lies — is about five parts per billion. The new tests have picked up levels as high as 17,000 parts per billion, Irwin said.

"It's surprising in that we'd hoped we didn't have it," Irwin said. "It's better that we found it now and it be dealt with, and I think Raytheon feels the same way."

Company spokeswoman Amy Hosmer said Raytheon needs to do more testing and will continue to work with Wayland to complete the cleanup.

"It's an important finding," she said. "Raytheon is committed, and it's very important to remediate that site."

Raytheon, which leased the property from 1955 to 1996, used it for photographic development, circuit board work, and hydraulic testing, among other things. Besides TCEs, hazardous material known to have been produced there includes polychlorinated biphenyl, or PCBs, metals, oils, and solvents.

Further testing will be done on the town-owned Cow Common Conservation Area, 65 acres of open space to the north of the Raytheon property. Irwin said testing may also need to be done on nearby US Fish and Wildlife land.

"There's a new open door, and

we don't know what going through that door will bring," said Selectwoman Linda Segal. "And I don't think Raytheon knows either."

Town officials plan to meet with company officials within a week or two to chart the next course.

The major concern is that the TCE contamination could move toward the Baldwin Pond drinking water wells further to the north. Though the data has so far proved inconclusive, town and state officials are monitoring that very closely.

Tests by the state Department of Environmental Protection, which is overseeing the cleanup effort, have shown that while the contamination has moved onto the town's conservation land, it has not migrated toward the Baldwin Pond wells.

"From what work we've done, we don't think there's any immediate problem," said Steve Johnson, the section chief for the DEP's site management program. "It's kind of a mixed message: It's a concern, yes, because it's in the Zone 2, and yes, the 17,000-parts-per-billion level is relatively high. But what we're seeing off-site is relatively low."

Independent of the new findings, Raytheon is supposed to file

a cleanup plan for previously identified contamination by the end of this year.

Some wetland areas on the property need to be excavated and replaced, and there are other hazardous materials that need to be addressed.

Raytheon has not yet decided whether to include the new TCE findings into that cleanup plan or treat them as a new initiative, Hosmer said.

Johnson said he wants to make sure the new discoveries don't delay the cleanup measures already on track.

Raytheon gave the town \$25,000 this year to hire its own environmental consultant, but town officials said the money isn't likely to

last past the end of the year.

Johnson also noted that recent layoffs at the DEP will make it harder to oversee the Raytheon cleanup and similar efforts across the state.

"I'd love to say that we're going to provide all the oversight that this site demands," he said. "Unfortunately, I have to tell people that we're looking to cut back on our commitments."

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AMY HOSMER