

Contamination source believed to be under HIA runway

"CONTAMINATION," continued from pg. 1

tabulated because of a breakdown of laboratory equipment. However, a sample taken at the Olmsted Building in October by the HIA Authority showed a reading of 1.2 ppb.

"Everyone would want this figure to diminish to zero,"

"These wells are supplying quality water to meet the airport and the Pennsylvania State University extension needs, but there is little surplus."

Donald Bryan
Deputy Transportation Secretary

Mashek said of the 1.2 ppb reading, "But the water is certainly safe."

The next water test is scheduled for sometime within the next two weeks.

When the DER tests, according to Mashek, a reading of 4.5 ppb prompts the notification of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the local water

authority by the DER.

DER policy also dictates that abatement measures, like treating or blending the water, be recommended at 45 ppb; the water company be strongly urged to take correctional steps and seek DER assistance at 100 ppb; and that a "boil water" notice be required at 200 ppb.

TCE, commonly used as a degreasing agent, can be driven off through steam when water is boiled.

Charles Cole, a Capitol Campus professor of engineering, said tests have shown that TCE is cancer-causing when ingested in large amounts by laboratory animals over extended periods of time, but that there have been people refuting that claim.

Cole said his classes have indicated an interest in TCE contamination, but cannot conduct tests because they require elaborate and expensive equipment not readily available to students.

After conducting several tests and studying maps and aerial photographs of the former Olmsted Air Force Base for the past seven months, DER officials have come to believe that the source of contamination is located in an area beneath a section of an HIA runway.

DeBenedictis said photographs show the United States Air Force may have used the area where the runway was later built as a landfill, and may have placed 55

Dept. of Environmental Resources Policy on Trichloroethylene Readings

4.5 ppb..... DER notifies the Environmental Protection Agency and brings low level readings to the attention of the water authority.

45 ppb..... DER recommends that the water company take abatement measures such as blending or treating the water.

100 ppb..... DER strongly urges water company to take steps to correct problem and offers assistance.

200 ppb..... DER requires "boil water" notice. TCE can be driven off in steam.

gallon drums filled with liquids containing TCE there.

The DER has not been able to find record of the actual material or how much of it was dumped at the site.

Since the contaminated area lies about midway along the 9,500 foot runway, a likely solution

may be to construct a temporary runway extension and dig out the contaminants, he said.

Even a temporary HIA shutdown could create serious financial ramifications since the airport annually pumps an estimated \$235,000,000 into the regional economy, while providing about 2,800 local jobs.

Although no cost figure has been tabulated as yet to what clean-up of the site would cost, it is believed by officials that the price tag would be high.

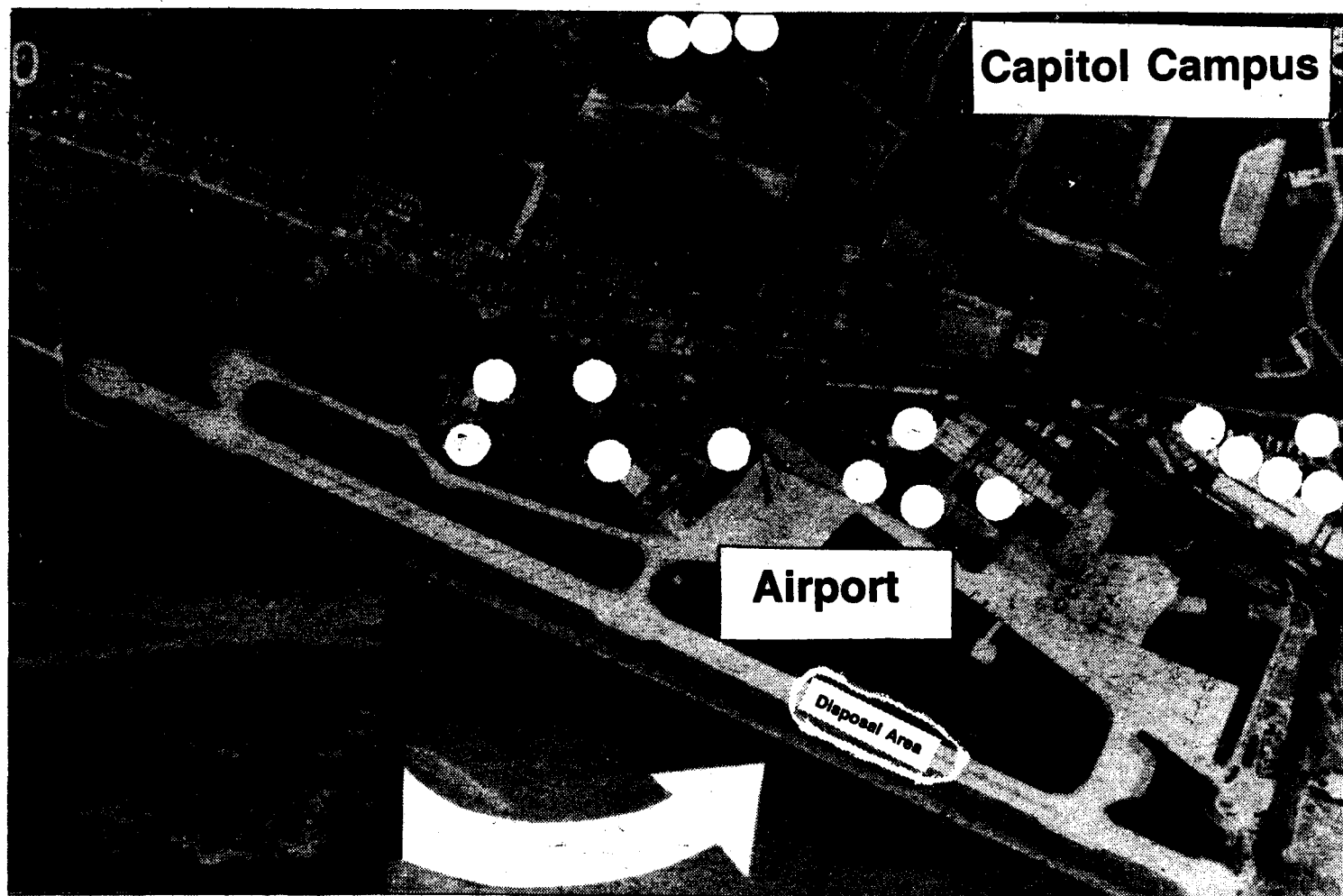
U.S. Rep. George Gekas (R-Pa.) indicated that he is seeking the aid of the EPA and the Air Force to raise funding to cleanup the problem.

The EPA helps pay for chemical-related cleanups through its "Superfund." Through this fund, 17 of 39 targeted chemical sites in Pennsylvania will be granted cleanup funds this year.

Since the HIA's runway lies parallel to the Susquehanna River, concern has also generated around the flow of ground water and the threat it poses to the location of the wells.

The seven wells currently shut down are in an area at an end of the runway directly in the path of the ground water flow from the river. Officials do not believe the four wells now in operation will be affected because they are not in direct line with the flow.

Officials also said at the press conference that the ground water flow should not carry contaminants toward the river.



White arrow points to area DER officials believe to be contaminated with TCE. Photo at lower left is a blown-up view of that section of runway when the area was an Air Force dump. White dots signify the location of wells, eleven of which are used. Seven are currently shut down. Wells at left of photo are used for Capitol Campus' water. DER officials believe these wells will be safe from contamination. Three wells in upper portion of photo are being considered for use.