

## Pearce Creek public hearing set for Sept. 27

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CECILTON — Earleville communities with wells that have been contaminated by dredge spoils dumped at Pearce Creek will be able to weigh in on a request to allow placement of dredge spoils to resume at a public hearing Sept. 27 at 9:30 a.m. at Cecilton Elementary School.

Presentations will be made at 9:30 a.m., followed by a question-and-answer period prior to the start of public testimony, which will be limited to three minutes per speaker.

Speakers are urged to bring a written copy of more detailed testimony to submit at the hearing in addition to their oral statement.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is requesting a water quality certification discharge permit from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) that would allow it to resume dumping at the site.

MDE has until next July to make its decision.

The Maryland Port Administration (MPA) is pushing for the reopening of Pearce Creek because it says it's much less expensive to use that site than other sites further away. They need to dredge shipping channels on a regular basis to allow cargo to flow in and out of the Port of Baltimore.

The Corps proposes to install a high-tech fabric liner over the existing dumpsite before depositing new material and MPA has agreed to pay for the construction of a water pipeline to the homes.

Residents from Bay View Estates, West View Shores, and Sunset Pointe are expected to show up at the hearing to voice their concerns.

Cecilton Mayor Joe Zang has been working with County Executive Tari Moore and officials from the Maryland Port Authority and the Corps for the last couple of years to provide clean water to the residents, but also find a safe way to allow the dumping to resume. They have a plan in place to run a public water line from the town of Cecilton to the homes, but still have some issues to finalize to make the project a reality.

"We've been working very hard on this," Zang said.

The Corps wants to start using Pearce Creek again by October 2015, but the residents object, saying operations shouldn't resume until the water line is completed.

"We're going to the hearing with a list of conditions," said Bill Haines, presidents of the Bay View Estates Homeowners Association.

Among them is a request for free, clean drinking water. Many residents have been paying for bottled water for years.

"It's not right," Haines said, adding that he has been paying \$728 a year for bottled water. "No one has wanted to deal with this for 20 years until recently. I give the Port of Baltimore an A-plus for the way they've worked with us."

Haines explained that a resident from his community was fed up with the long wait and wrote a letter about two weeks ago to the county council and the county executive requesting help.

"Councilwoman Broomell stepped up to the plate and said she'd help us," Haines said, noting she was the only one who responded.

Broomell brought it up Tuesday at the weekly council work session.

"They shouldn't have to pay for water," Broomell said, asking her colleagues to support writing a letter to the Corps requesting that it provide potable drinking water at no charge to residents.

Council President Robert Hodge asked County Manager James Massey to draft a letter after council members agreed.

County Attorney Jason Allison said that residents will be required to cap their wells and hook-up to public water once the water project is completed. The proposal is to not charge residents a connection fee, but they will have to pay for their water usage.

"MDE will look at possible exemptions for capped wells for irrigation," Allison said. "It will be done on a case-by-case basis."

Zang said the design is underway and should be done early next year. The next step will be to firm up a grant agreement for the construction of the water system, including the main line, distribution lines, connections and capping of wells.



### Pearce Creek open house

Chris Rogers (right), of URS Corp., answers questions from residents about the Cecilton water pipeline at the Pearce Creek community open house on Saturday, May 31.