

Dennis - Groundwater Bureau

OGC-000551

GWB-00605-SPARTON

Tribune

Saturday, May 4, 1996

# LOCAL NEWS

# A3

## Pollution threatens water, city says

**Mayor seeks authority for court action to force Sparton Technology to clean up contamination that has reached the city water supply.**

**By Dennis Domrzalski**  
TRIBUNE REPORTER

City Hall wants to force a quick cleanup of groundwater chemical pollution spreading from a now-closed West Side electronics plant.

Mayor Martin Chavez's administration sent a resolution to the City Council Friday asking for authority to go to court to force Sparton Technology Inc., to clean up solvent contamination from its old plant near Coors Road and Irving Boulevard Northwest.

The contamination from trichloroethyl-

ene, or TCE, and chromium has reached the city's underground water supply and is contained in a half-mile plume that is spreading up to 300 feet a year to the northwest along the Calabacillas Arroyo, said Assistant City Attorney Gary O'Dea.

The contamination concerns city officials because the arroyo has recently been identified as a "recharge window" by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Recharge windows are unique hydrological structures through which water can easily seep into underground water tables.

City officials have identified the arroyo as a way of potentially recharging the aquifer by letting the San Juan/Chama water it owns seep through.

"We think the problem is significant enough that it warrants immediate action," said City Hall's Chief Administrative Officer Lawrence Rael. "We need to protect the city's interest and the interest of the

county."

The resolution will be introduced at Monday night's City Council meeting.

Sparton officials in Rio Rancho referred questions to their corporate headquarters in Jackson, Mich. The headquarters had closed for business Friday when The Tribune called.

TCE concentrations of up to 400 times the federal drinking standard of 5 parts per million have turned up in monitoring wells not far from the site. The contamination is moving up to 10 acres a year and is dropping deeper into the aquifer, city officials say.

Sparton operated the plant from 1961 to 1994. From 1961 to 1980, solvents were "disposed of in a sump lined only with concrete blocks from which the solvent percolated into the ground," says a city fact sheet.

The contamination is of concern because water is pumped directly from underground

wells to water customers without treatment.

"The resolution recognizes the imminent and substantial threat or endangerment that is posed by the contamination," O'Dea said. "It also recognizes the value of our groundwater resource."

Sparton has been operating under a consent decree with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the past "few years," O'Dea said. Several monitoring wells track the contamination. But it has moved beyond the monitoring wells, and Sparton appears to be reluctant to drill more, the fact sheet says.

"The comments recently sent by Sparton to the (Environmental Protection Agency) suggest that Sparton will resist any attempt by the EPA to improve on the system currently in place," the fact sheet says.

O'Dea said he hoped the contamination could be cleaned up quickly without going to court.