

DOW

NASDAQ

NYSE

N. M.  
INDEX

FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 1996

5677.53  
-5.171166.01  
+12.73357.58  
+1.71146.34  
+57

C5

# Sparton Balks at Cleanup Costs

BY MICHAEL HARTRANFT  
Journal Staff Writer

Sparton Technology may be headed for a legal showdown over a federal plan for cleaning up contamination that originated at the company's now-inactive manufacturing plant on Coors NW.

The firm's parent company, Sparton Corp., said in a news release Thursday that its initial response to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's cleanup remedy announced this week is that it is "unreasonable and too costly."

"We don't know where we're going on this thing," John J. Smith, chairman of the Jackson, Mich.-based corporation, said in a phone interview. "We don't know what (the EPA is) going to do. How do we know what we're going to do?"

Culminating a process that began after the contamination was discovered in 1980, EPA officials on Monday announced the

selection of a remedy combining ground water pumping and treatment and soil vapor extraction.

EPA project manager Vince Malott said earlier this week that the effort could cost Sparton Technology \$15 million to \$26 million over a 30-year period.

Smith said an operation costing that much "will break us. Our net worth in Albuquerque is a lot less than that."

He also said no one has proved to the company that "they can clean it up doing it the way (the EPA) is proposing."

Under EPA procedures, EPA and Sparton have 60 days to negotiate an order to implement the cleanup.

"Should negotiations on the selected remedy fail, it would be necessary for the agency to move forward with litigation to solve the matter," Region 6 EPA spokesman Dave Bary said Thursday.

"But we'll certainly approach the negotiations with Sparton Technology in good faith

and certainly hope the company would approach the negotiating table with the same philosophy," he added.

Smith said his company has been negotiating. "But (the EPA is) now getting to a place where they don't want to negotiate any more," he added.

Sparton this spring proposed a cleanup alternative. It called for continued operation of a ground water pumping and treatment system on the company's property with one additional recovery well; additional sampling of soil vapors and installation of an extraction system if concentrations exceed a certain threshold and additional monitoring wells near the front of the contaminant plume.

The EPA solution calls for extraction wells at the front of the plume to prevent further movement. It also calls for more extraction wells both on the Sparton property and offsite in other areas of the plume, in addition to an onsite vapor extraction

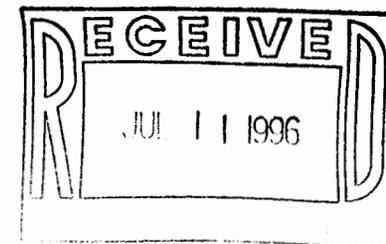
system.

Sparton is blamed for ground water contamination that experts say underlies nearly 90 acres on the West Side and that may be spreading at the rate of three to 10 acres a year.

The Coors plant, which manufactured electronic components from 1961 to 1994, sits on a 12-acre site. Solvents used in the manufacturing process are the source of the contamination, the EPA has said.

City officials say the contamination lies in a future well field and close to the Calabacillas arroyo, which is believed to be an area where surface water could be pooled and recharged into the aquifer that is Albuquerque's sole source of drinking water.

City officials have grown frustrated at the slow pace of the cleanup effort. On Wednesday, a City Council committee recommended passage of a bill that lays the groundwork for the city to sue Sparton.



GMB-00662-SPARTON

OGC-000502