

Vertac

● Continued from Page One researched both Vertac's discharges into the city's sewer system and the storm drainage system.

Ruby Brown, president of PAACE, and Claudette Hazlett, a PAACE member, said their group has collected dozens of federal, state and city documents that prove contaminated wastes were sent to the east plant from Vertac.

During the past year, Cindy Westra, a wildlife rehabilitator with Back to Nature, and Teri Bolding, a former Army surveyor, have joined the group in researching Vertac's discharges.

Westra said she is concerned with the impact to wildlife of contaminated wastes spreading into Holland Bottoms.

The group also contends contaminated surface runoff waters from the Vertac plant have flowed into canals and ditches that run past the east plant through Holland Bottoms.

"Whenever those canals and that plant would hydrologically back up, they would flood our neighborhood. Kids played in that water, animals drank from it. It's a crying shame," Brown said.

While Morris does not deny that Vertac could have discharged into the east plant, he said that it was unlikely.

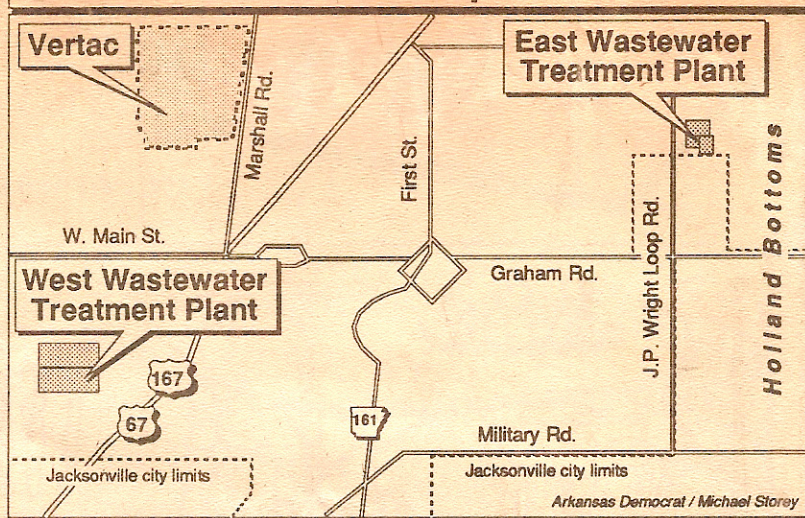
"Nobody knows absolutely for sure," he said. "But everything points to one direction and that's that it didn't happen."

Morris said to his knowledge there was no connection between the east plant and the west plant since 1958 when the only connection, located in the Sunnyside housing project, was "severed."

In addition, Morris said Vertac wastes could not have been sent to the east plant because the sewer system operates on a gravity system and flows from east to west.

But the EPA official said Vertac is built on a former World War II ordnance plant site and no one knows for sure what plumbing exists there. In

Jacksonville treatment plants



addition, Slimak said he was told that Vertac had its own pipeline to the east plant.

"We were walking through the plant (in 1983) and we were discussing the drainage system, particularly the issue of the floor drains. I asked where they went and I was told to the east treatment plant."

Slimak said he thought the company had sent wastes to the east side to avoid monitoring by city, state and federal agencies. Vertac had exceeded its discharge permit numerous times during the early 1980s. The plant was operated by various companies from 1946 until 1986.

"My concern was they manufactured 2,4,5-T (a herbicide) and there was a lot of residue in equipment and around the plant that had been there for years as well as the spillage and it was going to a treatment plant that was not being monitored," Slimak said.

Slimak said he expressed his concerns to other EPA officials that resulted in a "confidential" EPA memorandum being written.

"According to Mr. Slimec (sic), although this facility is no longer manufacturing any chlorinated phenols, the entire plumbing system is contaminated with dioxin," the memo states.

"Moreover, this facility collects runoff waters from the plant premises and discharges them through 'discreet and definite conveyance' which

means they need a (National Pollution Discharge Elimination System) permit for this discharge," the memo states.

"Mr. Slimec (sic) said there is good reason to believe that this discharge may be significantly contaminated with 2,3,7,8-TCDD (dioxin). However, the state of Arkansas and EPA Region VI have imposed no effluent limitations or monitoring conditions for TCDD in the NPDES permit soon to be public notices.

"Also, Mr. Slimec (sic) said that the Jacksonville municipal wastewater treatment plant is the recipient of the process wastewaters from the Vertac facility. He is very concerned about this given the severe contamination of the plumbing system at the plant," the memo states.

Phillip Charles, a spokesman for the EPA's Region VI office in Dallas, said Tuesday he was not sure who wrote the memo.

He said the EPA officials there have "no reason to believe" Vertac discharged into the east plant.

However, he said officials based that belief "on the city's research, who have reviewed their sewer lines and there does not appear to be a diversion to the east plant."

Morris said the city has about 175 miles of sewer lines and "it's not accurately mapped."

Slimak said it was "uncommon" for a city to not have maps of its sewer system.