Cedar Chemical Corporation (CCC) Plant Site
West Helena, Arkansas
(April 2005)

Issue:
EPA conducted offsite sampling in July 2004 and sampling results indicate groundwater contamination (primarily EDC) has migrated approximately 1 mile off of the CCC plant property onto agricultural farmland. The Arkansas Department of Health has required that the irrigation well with 27,100 ppb EDC (MCL 5.0 ppb) not be used while they evaluate risk. In 2001, the same well had only 46 ppb EDC present, suggesting offsite migration continues to occur.

ADEQ has no apparent plan to address the off-site migration of groundwater contamination at the site. Information concerning the EDC plume has not been shared with adjacent property owners. EPA has offered to conduct additional gw sampling both onsite and offsite to help characterize the plume and its movement, along with installing replacement ag wells as an interim measure to help minimize the offsite movement due to ag well pumping in the same contaminated gw zone.

As part of the CCC bankruptcy, ADEQ is soliciting new owners for the site to resume operations. According to ADEQ staff, only minimal cleanup (not including groundwater) will be required.

EPA has concerns that onsite and offsite environmental contamination may go unaddressed under the current plan to bring in a new operator. We also have concerns that the contamination issue is not being shared with the local community.

Recommendation:
Region 6 meet with ADEQ to discuss their plans for addressing onsite and offsite contamination and communicating this information with the local community.

Background:
The Cedar Chemical Company which produced herbicides and pesticides at the West Helena facility, ceased operations and filed for bankruptcy in March 2002, leaving behind a site with extensive environmental contamination, including on-site soils, and groundwater that extends beyond the property boundary. As dictated by the bankruptcy court ADEQ has overseen the property since October 2002 by providing site security and storm water management. As part of the bankruptcy decree, ADEQ is required to transfer ownership of the property to an ADEQ selected buyer to bring it back to productive use. On two separate occasions, ADEQ has formally solicited proposals from prospective purchasers to redevelop or operate the existing facility. ADEQ indicates that one potential purchaser is interested but is negotiating with ADEQ on liability issues and extent of cleanup that will be required. There appears to be significant interest from the Arkansas Governors' office and the West Helena Chamber to get the facility operating as soon as possible in order to bring jobs and revenue back to the area.