Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fort Drum to improve water security with key infrastructure project

FORT DRUM, N.Y. – A $27 million well field expansion project at Fort Drum will improve water security and ensure daily water needs are met for thousands of Soldiers, family members and civilians who live and work on post.

According to the Fort Drum Directorate of Public Works, the Well Field Expansion Resilience Project will include the construction of:

\*Five potable groundwater wells, to include telemetry, pumps, enclosures and generator

\*Up to 10 new monitoring wells

\*Underground communication duct banks

\*18-inch HDPE (high-density polyethylene) water main pipe from new wells to water treatment plant

\*Underground and Overhead Electric 3 Phase Power Distribution

“When Soldiers and family members turn on a faucet, they aren’t thinking about where the water is coming from, nor do we expect them to,” said Maj. Gen. Milford H. Beagle Jr., 10th Mountain Division (LI) and Fort Drum commander. “But we owe it to our community to have the most reliable and resilient water supply we can provide, and fortunately, we have a great garrison team focused on accomplishing that.”

Jim Miller, Fort Drum Directorate of Public Works’ Environmental Division chief, said half of the installation’s water demand is currently produced from the wells located at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield, and the remainder is from a municipal source.

Miller said that if there was ever a water shortage or stoppage from either source, it could negatively impact Soldier readiness and mission completion.

“What this project essentially does is give us some amazing redundancies in our potable water supply that currently doesn’t exist,” he said. “You can’t run a military installation without an adequate water supply at all times, and this guarantees we will always have a viable source in light of any emergency.”

Bob Avar, head of the Fort Drum Master Planning Branch, said the project falls under the Department of Defense’s Energy Resilience and Conservation Investment Program, which focuses on strategies to improve energy resilience, security, availability and economic performance.

“Not only will this project enhance our existing capabilities to meet our current and future water demands, but it also provides electrical distribution redundancy at the airfield to support high-demand industrial operations,” he said.

Avar said that planning went into the Fort Drum Well Field Expansion Resilience Project years in advance. This included surveying well sites for the best groundwater production, installing test wells, taking water samples and conducting numerous meetings with Army Corps of Engineers, regulatory agencies and other Fort Drum directorates.

“There’s a huge planning effort that goes into this, before you can even consider the design and build phase,” he said. “It took a number of years just to evaluate potential sites for the wells.”

The construction contract for the well field expansion is expected to be awarded by the end of fiscal year 2023, and construction could be completed by 2024.

Beagle said when that happens, it probably won’t get the same fanfare other infrastructure projects receive, but the impact it will have on the Fort Drum community is immeasurable.

“A new well field isn’t normally recognized by a ribbon-cutting ceremony like the grand opening of a new restaurant at the Exchange or a hangar on the airfield,” he said. “But make no mistake, there are a lot of people here who deservedly take pride when they can see a project like this come to fruition. We talk about building an Army that is ready and resilient. Well, this team we have at Fort Drum sees this not only as a quality of life issue, but as a readiness issue. And they have taken the appropriate steps to making sure we have what we need so we can complete our missions under any condition.”

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