

ASBURY PARK PRESS

Earle studies cleanup of tainted soil

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FREEHOLD BUREAU

EARLE -- Navy officials are looking to a new technology to clean up a one-acre site contaminated with chemical solvents as part of their overall plan to reclaim environmentally damaged areas.

Military officials said they hope to use a 2-foot-thick "reactive wall" to filter out trichloroethylene and other chemicals from the soil and nearby ground water at its site 26, which is located just south of the main entrance to Earle Naval Weapons Station near Route 34.

The wall, which uses iron to detoxify contaminants, would extend 10 feet below the surface and as much as 140 feet near the contaminated area, Navy officials said.

The cleanup was discussed during a meeting of the Earle Restoration Advisory Board Tuesday night. The board consists of 23 military, state, federal, county and local environmental officials who gather every few months to discuss ongoing environmental cleanup projects at the base.

John Kolicius, an engineer from the Northern Division of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, said any chemicals in the water passing through the wall will react with the iron, purifying the water.

Kolicius said engineers will need to dig a trench to a clay level about 12 feet below the surface, which currently keeps the solvents from seeping deeper into the ground water.

"It's a passive technology," he said of the reactive wall. "The advantages are you don't have to worry about electricity or anything breaking down."

Navy officials said the wall, which would remain in place after the filtering operation is completed, will need to be monitored occasionally, but they do not believe the iron inside the wall itself will pose an environmental hazard.

In other news, Navy officials said they probably will need to cut down a number of pine trees located on a five-acre site of the base as part of efforts to cap an abandoned landfill.

Kolicius said officials are reluctant to remove the trees, but it is the only way the Navy can effectively cap the five-acre site, which is located just east of Macassar Road. Officials said about 10,200 tons of domestic and industrial wastes were disposed of at the site between 1943 and 1960.

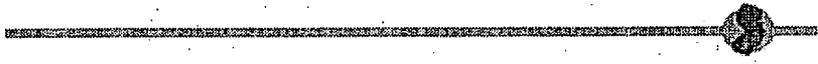
The pine trees were planted there in the early 1980s, officials said.

"Any time you have to destroy trees where there is a habitat concern, you are really reluctant," said Kolicius. "But the overall concern is more important. The site is five acres in the middle of an 11,000-acre area. We want to make sure there isn't percolation there."

The next Restoration Advisory Board meeting has been scheduled for May 15.

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