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NSY PORTSMOUTH
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LETTER REGARDING THE TRANSMITTAL OF THE BROCHURE OUTLINING CLEANUP AT
NSY PORTSMOUTH ME
11/15/1996
SEACOAST ANTI-POLLUTION LEAGUE

The Seacoast Anti-Pollution League

Founded 1969

SAPL

127 HIGH STREET / P. O. BOX 1136

PORTSMOUTH, NH 03802

603-431-5089

November 15, 1996

Ken Plaisted
Navy Co-Chairman
Restoration Advisory Board
Portsmouth Naval Shipyard
Portsmouth, NH 03804-5000

Dear Ken:

Thank you for the welcome to the RAB the other night. I'm glad to be on it and look forward to increasing my meager knowledge. I also hope SAPL can be of help as a community member on the board.

I see that Meghan Cassidy spoke about the TAG at the September 19th RAB meeting. I'm not sure what I can add at this time but I'd be happy to take questions from anyone at the next meeting.

More than a year ago, before my time at SAPL, we received a grant from the Greater Piscataqua Community Foundation to produce a brochure that would outline the Shipyard clean up, the TAG, and SAPL's role in administering the grant. It has just been printed and I wanted to make sure you saw one from us before it arrived by some other method. I hope that is the case.

Again, thank you for the warm welcome and I look forward to working together.

Sincerely,



Peter Vandermark

The Shipyard Legacy

The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard is the nation's first and oldest Navy shipyard.

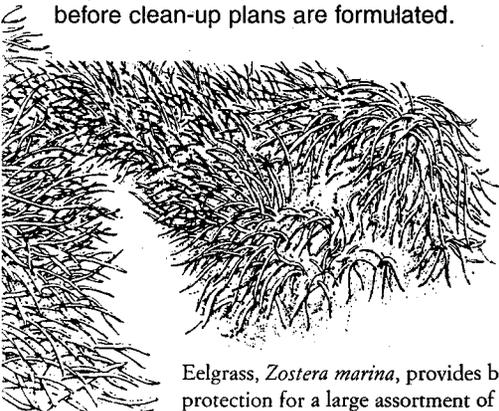
Founded in 1800 on Seavey Island in the Piscataqua River, between Kittery, Maine, and Portsmouth, N.H., it's been a significant site of construction, overhaul and decommissioning of warships, including the nation's nuclear submarines.

Just upstream from the Gulf of Maine, the Shipyard occupies 276 acres, many of which were created by landfills connecting a series of smaller islands to Seavey Island. Some of these landfills are made up of waste from the Shipyard's operations, disposed of in ways considered to be acceptable at the time.

Not until the 1970s, when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created, were many of the Shipyard's waste disposal practices recognized as potentially hazardous to the local ecology and public health.

In 1994, the Shipyard was designated a Superfund site, a status given by the EPA to hazardous waste sites considered to be potentially the most threatening to people and the environment. There are about 1200 Superfund sites in the nation, 95 in New England.

Although waste from several of the Shipyard's smaller sites has been removed and other locations are being monitored, about a dozen of the largest and most serious sites require further investigation before clean-up plans are formulated.



Eelgrass, *Zostera marina*, provides both food and protection for a large assortment of plants and animals.

Monitoring the Clean-up at the Superfund Site

The EPA and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection are overseeing the Navy's plans for cleaning up sites at the Shipyard. There is also a federally-mandated Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), a citizen panel intended to represent the public's interests in the clean-up planning and implementation. The RAB includes a representative from the Seacoast Anti-Pollution League.

How dirty is it?

Examples of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard waste sites:

Jamaica Island Landfill: The 25-acre, 19-foot-deep landfill, built on a former mudflat, contains mercury, lead, chromium, PCBs and other petroleum-based products. Heavy metals presumed to be from the landfill have been discovered in river mud and marine life, including plants, fish and lobsters.

The Salvage Yard: At one end of the Shipyard, across from the causeway between Newcastle and Portsmouth, sulfuric acid compounds and heavy metals have leached or washed into the Piscataqua River from diesel submarine batteries. The batteries were stored in the open air for years.

THE PISCATAQUA RIVER ECOSYSTEM

The Piscataqua River is an ocean dominated ecosystem extending from the Gulf of Maine to large inland tributaries. This estuary consists of numerous significant habitats. For example, eelgrass habitats function as nursery grounds and feeding zones for finfish and invertebrates. River intertidal areas create crucial habitats for crustaceans. It is the diversity of river habitats which define an ecosystem's health. Stress, created by pollution, on one habitat can affect the viability of the entire system.

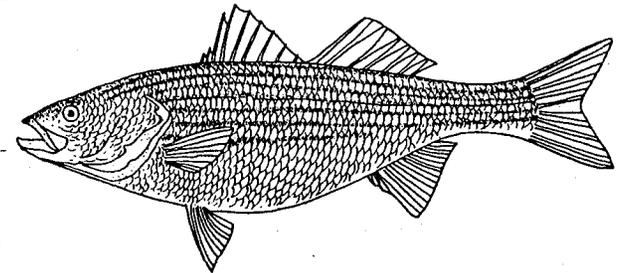
Long-term polluting sources have stressed the ecology surrounding the Shipyard. The productivity of stressed ecosystems may be severely impaired. For example, eelgrass beds, near pollution sources which appear green and healthy, may actually be trapping and absorbing toxins. Fish, crustaceans and shellfish that occupy these habitats are exposed to and may ingest the accumulated toxins. The reproduction, growth or survival of these organisms can be adversely affected and the toxic effects passed up the food chain to other organisms, including humans.

Assessment of the environmental risks posed by the Shipyard has generated reams of highly technical information that requires knowledge beyond the scope of the general public and most RAB members.

To help translate this information for the public and to better monitor the clean-up process, SAPL recently secured a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) from the EPA.

This three-year, \$50,000 TAG allows SAPL to hire expert advisors to review and assess the waste-monitoring and clean-up — information which SAPL will share with the general public via meetings, news releases and newsletters.

Striped bass, *Morone saxatilis*, eat fish, crabs, clams, worms and squid.



"High concentrations of heavy metals in marine sediments along the face of Jamaica Island [landfill] indicate they may be associated with contaminants at the landfill."

DR. FREDERICK SHORT, JACKSON ESTUARINE LABORATORY

This brochure is funded in part by a grant to SAPL from the Greater Piscataqua Community Foundation. Printed on recycled paper. Color printing donated by a friend of SAPL.

The Seacoast Anti-Pollution League An Environmental Watchdog

SAPL is a non-profit citizens' organization founded in 1969, before the first Earth Day and before the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. It is dedicated to preserving the public health and safety and environmental quality of the Seacoast regions of New Hampshire and southern Maine.

SAPL focused much of its attention in past years opposing the construction of the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant and continues to monitor the plant's operation, especially regarding issues of public health and safety. In 1995, the EPA recognized SAPL with an Environmental Citizen's Award for its long-time commitment to the environment. Most recently, SAPL has expanded its focus to include issues at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Superfund site.

What can you do?

- Become informed about shipyard clean-up activities.
- Volunteer to help SAPL monitor the Superfund site.
- Attend community informational hearings.
- Join us in our efforts by becoming a member of SAPL.

Send your tax-deductible contribution and the form below to:
SAPL, P.O. Box 1136, Portsmouth, NH 03802 / 603-431-5089.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Notify me about community hearings regarding the Superfund site.

\$10 Student/Fixed Income

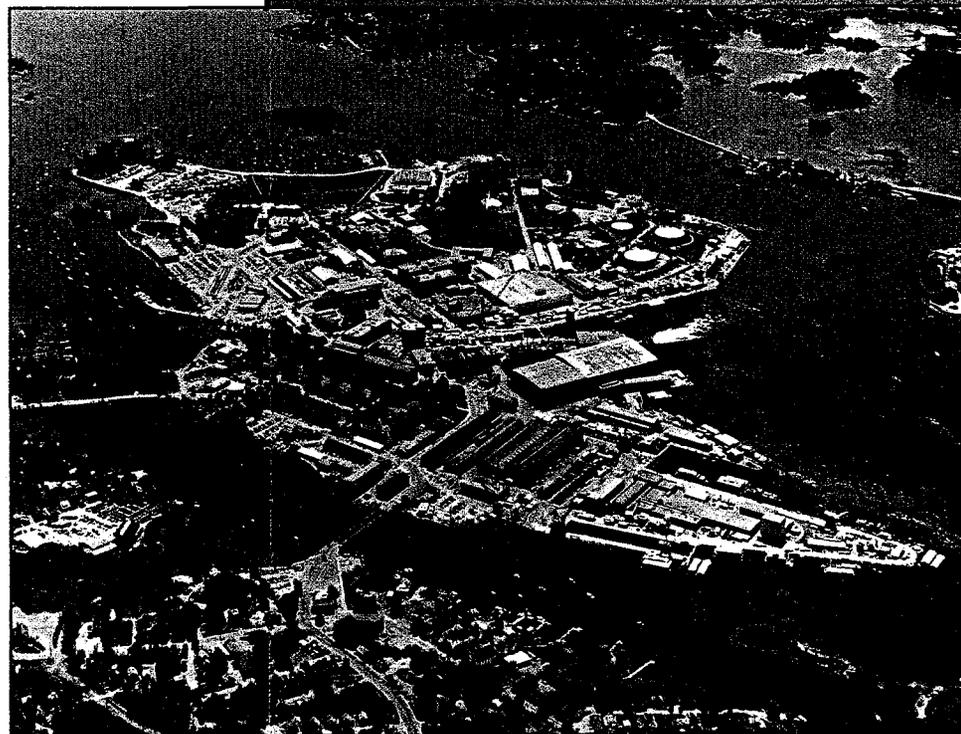
\$25 Individual \$50 Contributing

\$35 Family \$150 Sustaining

Here is my additional contribution of \$ _____

SAPL
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Living
with the
Superfund Site
at the
Portsmouth Naval
Shipyard



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...the
...and
Water Quality of the
...River