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Navy to stabilize Superfund site

By Larry Favinger
Staff Writer

Location one of the most contaminated at PNS

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD—The Navy will have work done this fall to stabilize an area of erosion of lead-contaminated soil from a Superfund site. The area in question is near the defense utilization and marketing office, across the Piscataqua River from Pelice Island, and is under investigation as a CERCLA site.

The Navy became aware of the problem this summer and notified environmental officials Aug. 16. "In years past, use of this specific area led to contamination of the soil by heavy metals such as lead," Alan M. Robinson, of the shipyard's Congressional and Public Affairs Office, said yesterday. "Today this area is used to

store excess materials and equipment before they are sold or recycled." "The Navy has notified federal and state environmental protection agencies that an increase in the release of lead-contaminated soil is occurring at the shipyard," Steve Haberman, the executive director of the Seacoast Anti-

Pollution League, said. "We feel it raises sufficient concerns to justify alerting the public to this release." Robinson said the Navy will stabilize the area by putting a geotextile liner and rip rap (stone) along the shoreline to hold the soil in place and prevent further erosion. "The design and implementa-

tion of this action is being accomplished in accordance with CERCLA and will be reviewed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, as well as the members of the shipyard Restoration Advisory Board," he said. The next meeting of RAB is Sept. 23.

SAPL said the reason for concern is soil samples taken in the area of the DRMO show lead content as high as 110,000 parts per million, well above the 47 parts per million the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration estimates results in adverse biological effects. "At the current time, the Navy is planning to decommit (use) funds awarded to other projects to fund

See Site, Page A15

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Navy to stabilize lead-contaminated soil at site

Site from Page A1

this emergency removal action," Frederick J. Evans, the remedial project manager at the shipyard, said in a letter to the EPA and Maine DEP.

Evans said the Navy has already contracted a firm to design the

emergency action and a draft design/work plan is scheduled to be completed by Sept. 20.

The site in question is one of the most contaminated sites of the 18 at the shipyard. For years it was used for storage of motors, scrap metals, lead, nickel-cadmium batteries, and other materials.

Contaminants found there include lead, arsenic, chromium, manganese and magnesium, and well as PCBs and petroleum hydrocarbons.

"Still to be answered are questions concerning how much of the contaminated soil has already washed into the river, where that

soil has ended up and what impact it will have on the sensitive ecology of the Great Bay Estuarine system," Haberman said.

"The Navy must address these concerns in order to assure residents of this area their health and safety will not be affected by this problem."