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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "NAVY TOOK STRONG FIRST STEP IN REACTING TO  
CONTAMINATED SOIL" NSY PORTSMOUTH ME  
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## Navy took strong first step in reacting to contaminated soil

Environmentalists must keep watchful eye on situation

**T**here is an almost palatable distrust of the Navy and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard within the environmental community on the Seacoast.

Although it would be healthier if that were to disappear suddenly — to be replaced on both sides by a straightforward, truthful approach to issues of concern to us all — it will never happen.

This distrust is not something manufactured out of thin air. Over the years, the Navy has been less than forthcoming in dealing with environmental problems, like much of the rest of the federal government.

There have been times when misinformation has been the rule instead of the exception, when environmental problems were not taken seriously, when issues of concern were swept under the rug — out of sight, out of mind.

The latest situation concerns the erosion of lead-contaminated soil from an area at the yard opposite Peirce Island. The Navy identified it, took temporary

action to slow or stop it, and is working on a permanent solution to deal with it.

Reaction on this particular issue has covered the spectrum, but all those involved — the Seacoast Anti-Pollution League, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and the federal Environmental Protection Agency — have said it's good to see the Navy admitting the situation exists and acting to deal with it.

Sure there's disagreement. The most common question is why the problem was not discovered and dealt with earlier. That is to be expected.

From where we sit, it's good to see the Navy stepping up on this one, acting quickly to deal with a problem about which we are all concerned.

At the same time, we don't want to see the environmentalists backing away or down as they provide an important part of the checks and balances in getting the shipyard cleaned up and in protecting the Seacoast's fragile environment.