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PNS site cleanup moves ahead

By Larry Favinger
Staff Writer

KITTERY — Another step toward the cleanup of a major landfill has been taken.

"The Navy has completed a draft feasibility study for the Jamaica Island Landfill at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard," Alan M. Robinson of the shipyard's Congressional and Public Affairs Office said yesterday. "This study evaluates the alternatives for remediation and provides a range of solutions from which the Navy will select a preferred final action."

Made public Thursday night at the shipyard's Restoration Advisory Board meeting at the Courtyard Marriott in Portsmouth, the choices range for no action, at a cost of \$21,560, to complete excavation; off-site disposal; and controls for groundwater estimated to cost about \$1 billion.

After comments from the public, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Restoration Advisory Board, and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection are received and concerns are addressed, a final study will be published.

A plan for the cleanup, called a Record of Decision, will be created, after which a remedial design will be completed. The Navy will then take action with the approval of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Public comment will be solicited throughout the process, which could begin sometime between 2001 and 2002.

"The regulators and the Shipyard Restoration Advisory Board are reviewing the document, which will be finalized after resolution of comments," Robinson said.

The landfill covers about 25 acres for former tidal mud flats that were filled between 1945 and 1978. Waste disposed of there includes general refuse, trash, construction rubble, incinerator ash, plating sludges, asbestos insulation, waste oil and solvents, spent sand blasting grit and dredge spoils.

Also buried there were two mercury burial vaults that contain fluorescent bulbs, thermometers, mercury switches, rags, brooms, and other mercury-contaminated waste.

One of those vaults has been located and removed. The other remains missing.

Actions already taken as part of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, or Superfund, cleanup include the removal of one mercury vault, two buried waste oil tanks, along with 332 tons of soil and hydromulching along the shoreline in Clark Cove to prevent soil erosion.

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