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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "PNS WASTE PLAN AFFECTS BOTH SIDES OF RIVER" NSY
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PNS waste plan affects both sides of river

Portsmouth and Kittery are Siamese twins joined geographically at the hip by the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNS) and short of an earthquake, there's no way to separate us.

One day soon the boundary dispute will be adjudicated, but that won't move the yard a nautical inch and we're both going to survive. Money drives the current Supreme Court case, but that's relatively inconsequential compared with the workaday dynamic that makes the yard a sleeping giant.



David Balkin

PNS is a heavy-industry nuclear facility that has a permit to generate and store its own hazardous waste. For much of its 200 years, PNS did not need permits to dump anything, and the constant regional denominator is our unrequited search to discover exactly what's been buried there and what's been cleaned up.

The government hasn't exactly been forthcoming, and now it's seeking approval to amend the haz-

ardous waste permit for PNS to include waste from other New England defense facilities. This would make PNS either New England's transfer point or the region's dumping ground, depending upon the spin. For bureaucratic purposes, this turns out to be in Kittery's bailiwick because PNS is still in Maine. The Oct. 18 public hearing is at the Day's Inn in Kittery and all inquiries are through the state of Maine's Board of Environmental Protection.

Phil McCarthy, Kittery's town manager, supports the permit change because it's about paint and other materials that aren't supremely hazardous and need to be consolidated so they can be shipped off to their final resting place.

There are three imposing volumes in Kittery Town Hall that detail the parameters of this proposal, and my guess is it's about more than paint. The public hearing will reveal the salient facts buried in this welter of information.

That's if the government can be trusted to be completely forthcoming. I'm not a complete cynic, the government has been known to tell the truth; it's just hard to figure out when.

Not incidentally, what happens if the court rules that PNS is actually in New Hampshire? Somebody ought to be asking Portsmouth City Manager John Bohenko just in case. Maybe he's not quite as easy to get along with as Mr. McCarthy when it comes to adding more toxic chemicals to the region.

Maybe he hasn't thought about it, but it's time. How good can this be for us? It's something both sides of the river will leave out of their chambers brochures.

Hey, Kittery, if you thought malls were life and death, what's up with this?

At first, second and third blush, nobody in their right mind wants hazardous waste brought to their front yard. Accepting 55-gallon drums of mysterious mixtures does not sound like a promising start to the 21st century.

Besides, there's compelling fairness to make each defense facility deal with what it creates. Every

community pays a price for jobs, particularly in this aware age, and dealing with its own mess is one of them.

OK, OK, Kittery deserves what it gets, but PNS is a crown jewel that graces both our heirloom habitats. As divided as Kittery is, this may fall between some very large

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cracks. If I lived in Portsmouth, I'd pay close attention.

Wouldn't you folks feel chagrined, a polite word for stunningly stupid, if you let an embattled group of Kittery citizens speak for your front yard? Especially if New Hampshire's DNA turns up on an old map and, heaven bless us, Portsmouth turns out to be the father.

David Balkin is a resident of Kittery Point.