

N00102.AR.002193
NSY PORTSMOUTH
5090.3a

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "PUBLIC GETS INFORMATION ABOUT SUPERFUND CLEANUP
SITE" NSY PORTSMOUTH ME
12/8/2000
FOSTER'S DAILY DEMOCRAT

Public gets info about Superfund cleanup site

By JENNIFER L. SAUNDERS and MATTHEW WILLIAMS
Democrat Staff Writer

PORTSMOUTH — The Seacoast Anti-Pollution League is urging area residents to learn more about current plans for a Superfund site at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and to make their opinions known to the Navy.

During a panel discussion held Wednesday night at the Unitarian Church in downtown Portsmouth, about a dozen area residents listened as Carolyn LePage, Seacoast Anti-Pollution League technical assistance adviser, gave an overview presentation of the Navy's proposed plan to cap the 25-acre Jamaica Island Landfill with a hazardous waste cover.

The landfill is under review for remediation through the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, commonly known as Superfund.

Also on hand at the discussion were several individuals in the know about the Navy's plan including Iver McLeod of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Meghan Cassidy of the Environmental Protection Agency and Doug Bogen of New Hampshire Clean Water Action. Bogen is also community co-chair of the shipyard's Restoration Advisory Board, which is part of the Superfund review process.

"We invited the Navy, but they declined to come," explained Johanna Lyons, a program specialist for the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development Division of Parks and Recreation. Lyons introduced the panelists, but said New Hampshire is not playing a role in the Navy's decision.

Although the Navy is the lead agency in this project, its tests and actions are monitored and must be approved by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

The Jamaica Island Landfill was a receptacle for industrial wastes for the 33-year period between 1945-78. The types of chemicals detected in the site include volatile and semivolatile organic compounds, PCBs, pesticides, metals, petroleum hydrocarbons and dioxins.

"There is even a rumor they may have buried a two-man submarine down there,"

☆ Superfund

Please turn to Page 5

Superfund

Continued from Page 3

said LePage, who explained the Navy's record keeping for waste disposal at the site was poor.

The shipyard was placed on the National Priorities List for Defense Department cleanups in 1994, when it was discovered that surface water runoff and erosion were contaminating the Piscataqua River, according to the Seacoast Anti-Pollution League.

The Navy's preferred plan to deal with the site uses a geotextile, virtually impermeable cover with an enhanced drainage layer for the landfill site. The cover itself would be supplemented with a variety of control and monitoring mechanisms. Although the plan addresses isolating from human contact soil and groundwater within the landfill's perimeter, it does not deal with the seepage of groundwater already present at the site.

The estimated capital construction cost for the Navy's preferred remediation plan is approximately \$10.2 million plus almost \$1.5 million in monitoring over the next 30 years.

It is not the most expensive plan the Navy considered, however. Earlier in the Restoration Advisory Board process, discussions were brought up regarding the removal of contaminants from the site. At the time, officials stated the cost was prohibitive and the removal process could produce other risks of contamination.

"It would cost an outrageous amount of money to move the waste," LePage said, explaining that estimated costs of digging up the waste would alone cost \$500 million.

In recent months, the Navy and Restoration Advisory Board narrowed the scope of possible remedies to five, ranging from taking no action at all to monitoring the site to capping the site and creating a barrier wall outside the landfill's perimeter. Residents at Wednesday night's meeting expressed concern and distrust over the Navy's ultimate control over the project.

A number of residents questioned why two of the remedies were even suggested when they would not even meet current environmental laws. Residents were also concerned why the preferred plan does not deal

with hazardous waste seeping into the Piscataqua River.

Studies provided by the Navy do not show there is enough risk of much seepage occurring, Cassidy said, although another remediation alternative proposed a type of cutoff barrier that would attempt to block any seepage. However, Cassidy said there was significant concern over whether a cutoff barrier would be possible.

Again, residents were curious why the barrier was even listed as an alternative.

The waste in the landfill have been present for 40 or 50 years and they have been flushed twice a day by tidal changes in the Piscataqua River, Cassidy said. As bad as it sounds, Cassidy said, there cannot be much harmful waste product that has not already been washed out to sea.

"But a lot of the waste is above the water level. The sea level is rising every year," Bogen said. "It is not a static situation."

Although Bogen agrees with the capping plan, he does not think the Navy has been doing enough.

Regardless of what the public thinks about seepage into the Piscataqua, the Navy will only consider comments that deal directly with the "source control area," which means the actual landfill and nothing else.

"I think it's kind of pathetic the Navy wasn't here tonight," said Seacoast Anti-Pollution League President David Hills.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act process requires the Navy to make its decision on the plan by July, with a remedial design expected to be completed in August. The remedial action on the site is expected to be completed in October 2002. The proposed solution is expected to be presented for its public comment period beginning Jan. 31. Comments will be taken at public hearings as well as in written form during a 30-day public comment period on the final plan in February.

Comments from the regulatory commissions and Restoration Advisory Board were due to the Navy by Wednesday, with the draft final version of the plan scheduled for submittal Dec. 27.

12/8/98