

N00102.AR.002423  
NSY PORTSMOUTH  
5090.3a

LETTER REGARDING SEACOAST ANTI-POLLUTION LEAGUE COMMENTS ON U S NAVY  
RESPONSES TO COMMENTS ON 2003 DRAFT SITE SCREENING INVESTIGATION  
REPORT FOR SITE 34 NSY PORTSMOUTH ME  
5/11/2004  
LEPAGE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

# Lepage Environmental Services, Inc.

P. O. Box 1195 • Auburn, Maine 04211-1195 • 207-777-1049 • Fax: 207-777-1370

May 11, 2004

Ms. Marty Raymond  
Portsmouth Naval Shipyard  
Code 106.3 R, Building 44  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03804-5000

Subject: Review of Responses to Comments on the December 2003 Draft *Site Screening Investigation Report for Site 34*

Dear Ms. Raymond:

We are transmitting the following comments on behalf of the Seacoast Anti-Pollution League (SAPL) on the Navy's March 2004 Responses to Comments on the December 2003 Draft *Site Screening Investigation Report for Site 34* (SSI Report). The SAPL comment numbers listed for each topic below correspond to specific comments in SAPL's letter dated February 5, 2004, regarding the Draft SSI Report.

**1. Drainage System (SAPL Comments 4, 7, 11).** SAPL had asked for additional information on the drainage system (both current and historic) associated with Site 34. The Navy's response to SAPL Comment Number 4 states utility maps consulted show that the storm drain system that leads to Outfall 49 only includes Drain 49-1 and 49-2. Are the utility maps that were consulted for current conditions only or is historical information available? Given the site use for pesticide storage (and possibly mixing, handling, and disposal), as well as the tar pit possibly located under Building 62, knowledge of historical drainage features (which may still exist today, even if not intentionally used for drainage) is needed to understand potential contaminant migration pathways. And by focusing only on the outfall connected to the wash pad, the Navy may be overlooking potential CERCLA releases and impacts. SAPL believes that additional scrutiny for pesticides in Site 34 environmental media will be needed once the ash pile removal action is complete to determine that no CERCLA release of pesticides has occurred.

**2. Site Background Information (SAPL Comments 6, 7, 9, 12, 23, 30).** In these comments, SAPL had requested that information from previous reports, specifically the Site 34 QAPP, be added to the SSI Report. The Navy responses indicate that some information will be added. With regard to information the Navy will not be adding, SAPL believes that it is important to list the pesticides reportedly stored at Site 34 to present a more complete picture of potential contaminants. SAPL also believes it is important the SSI Report also state the possibility (because the Navy responded it does not have any additional or contrary information) that pesticides were also handled, mixed, spilled, and/or disposed at Site 34.

**3. Vertical Distribution of Pesticides (SAPL Comments 18, 20, 21, 23).** The Navy's responses to SAPL's comments regarding the vertical distribution of pesticides in soil samples refer to the response to USEPA Comment Number 3, which in turn refers to Appendix D. Appendix D presents a comparison of facility background concentrations to site concentrations. It does nothing to answer SAPL's questions regarding the mobility and migration of pesticides at Site 34. These questions are important because of the unknowns regarding pesticide handling and disposal at the site and the possibility of drainageways (including historic features) that could provide migration pathways. It is also unclear if pesticide-contaminated soil was pushed around the site, during the construction and paving of the roadway, for instance.

**4. Reliability of Soil Sampling Method (SAPL Comment 21).** The Navy's response to SAPL Comment Number 21 characterizes the low concentration of pesticide reported beneath the ash layer at 34SB16 as *"it is highly likely that some of the overlying material sloughed off in to the top of the next sample interval and a fragment inadvertently included with the sample."* Page 2 of Appendix D includes the following: *"Open boreholes have the potential for sloughing of material from the exposed borehole wall down to the top of the next deeper sampling interval. Slough present at the top of the sample tube was separated from the soil collected for chemical analysis. Nevertheless, minor amounts of slough may be inadvertently included in the deeper sample. This is likely the reason for very low detections of DDD, DDE, and DDT at 6 to 10 feet bgs in sample 34SB160610."*

The Navy's response calls into question the results for all the soil samples collected, not just at 34SB160610. If sloughed contaminated material can raise the concentrations of contaminants detected in the underlying sample interval, then sloughing at other locations might also "dilute" the concentrations detected with the addition of "clean" material from the overlying interval. What does the documentation of sampling activities show? Was sloughing noted? If so, how was it determined to have occurred? How often and where did it occur? Which samples might have been affected?

**5. Tar Pit (SAPL Comment 31).** SAPL concurs with the MEDEP (Comment Number 2, dated April 26, 2004) that SVOCs should not be eliminated as analytical parameters; they should help to better determine potential effects from the tar pit.

**6. TEQ and TEQ HALFND (SAPL Comment 32).** The Navy's response states that the Navy is currently evaluating how to address the congeners issue and that additional discussion with the regulators and RAB is necessary. SAPL looks forward to those discussions and resolution of this issue.

Page 3 of 3, M. Raymond  
May 11, 2004  
Site 34 Responses to Comments, SSI Report

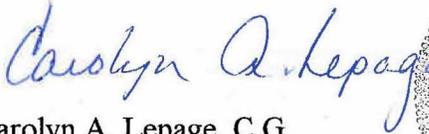
**7. Comparison with Facility Background (SAPL Comments 25, 32).** Like the MEDEP (Comment Number 4, dated April 26, 2004), SAPL has reviewed the Navy's January 30, 2004, "Policy on the Use of Background Chemical Levels" that was attached to the Responses to Comments. SAPL reiterates its long-standing position that contaminants that exceed screening criteria should not be eliminated from consideration for risk based on comparison with facility background concentrations.

**8. Statistical Tests.** SAPL concurs with the MEDEP (Comment Number 1, dated April 26, 2004) that the Navy should provide additional information so that the statistical tests in Appendix E can be reviewed.

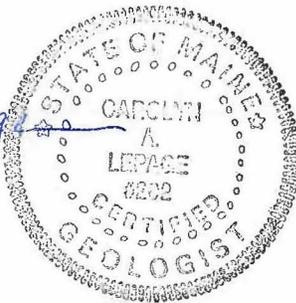
**9. Appendix D.** Several concerns regarding portions of Appendix D have already been covered in comments above (mobility, migration, and vertical distribution of pesticides; sloughing soils). The MEDEP covered normal probability plots in Comment Number 3, dated April 26, 2004. SAPL appreciates the presentation of pesticide concentration information from some of the literature on pages 2 and 3 in the appendix. For the locations cited, how do application rates and methods compare with the Shipyard's? What about climate and soil conditions? For the data from the Maine forest soils exposed to aerial spraying, were these locations covered with trees and sprayed from the air? How would conditions at the Maine site(s) reported in the literature compare with the Shipyard (application rate and method, soil characteristics, vegetative cover, etc.)? What are the depths of the samples reported in the literature? Are they surface soils? Subsurface soils? How does the pesticide concentration vary with depth?

If you have any questions regarding the comments above, please give me a call at 207-777-1049.

Sincerely,



Carolyn A. Lepage, C.G.  
President



cc: James Horrigan, SAPL  
Iver McLeod, MEDEP  
Matt Audet, USEPA