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News Clips



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Mayport takes care of things

By Adam Thomas
Shorelines staff writer

“
The Navy's done a very good job at being open. I'm very pleased with what they have done.
”

Atlantic Beach resident Bob Weiss

more environmentally safe. A series of poster-sized aerial photographs showed the development of Mayport from 1950 to 1994. Other posters showed the options for site cleanup, including microorganisms which actually eat petroleum-based pollutants. Some displays featured sampling and cleanup equipment, diagrams on risk assessment and the ways in which the RAB communicates with the general public.

Jim Cason, a Florida Department of Environmental Protection agent who is working on similar projects at three bases, said the contamination

at Mayport is low. Atlantic Beach resident Bob Weiss, RAB community co-chair, said that because Mayport is geographically secluded, the contamination did not spread. Additionally, the geological features of the area kept the pollution from contaminating ground water, Weiss said. Unlike some bases, Mayport has no chemical pollutants. Most contamination at the base is petroleum based.

To identify sites, Weiss said, officials interviewed people who had worked at the base since the 1950s, and took core samples from around the area. A Navy dive team even took core samples from the bottom of the St. Johns River. During sampling, chemicals are measured in one part per billion or one part per trillion. One display explained that one part per billion is like finding a specific corn kernel in a corn-filled silo 45 feet high and 16 feet in diameter.

Mayport is the Navy Environmental Leadership Program's model base for Navy and Marine bases in the Southeast.

"The Navy's done a very good job at being open," Weiss said. "I'm very pleased with what they have done."

ATLANTIC BEACH —

With a mile of ocean shoreline, four miles of river shore and half its land classified as wetlands, Mayport Naval Station is surrounded by a delicate environment.

But the base is also flanked by communities. And any action that affects the environment at the base will most likely affect the nearby cities, too.

Last year the base established the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), a group of residents, Navy representatives and officials from state and federal regulatory agencies who mull over environmental cleanup issues at the base.

On Tuesday, the group showcased its efforts at a community forum at the Sea Turtle Inn.

"We want to keep the community informed," said Cheryl Mitchell, RAB Navy co-chair. "There's a trust that's there with the community."

The open house featured a 10-minute video detailing the history of Mayport and outlined current efforts to identify and treat contaminated sites at the base. The video also discussed ways in which the base altered day-to-day operations to make them