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## Concerns voiced over threat to cove Hearing tonight on BNAS plan for contamination

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BRUNSWICK — The Department of the Navy has proposed a cleanup plan to address water, soil and sediment contamination for Site 9 at the Brunswick Naval Air Station.

The plan is being supported by the Maine Department of Environment Protection, but has drawn criticism from local officials. The public will have the opportunity to make comments concerning the Site 9 proposal at a 6:30 p.m. meeting tonight in the Brunswick Municipal Meeting Room at 44 McKeen St. Representatives from the Navy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 1 and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection will be in attendance.

Site 9 is one of several BNAS sites being examined for the possibility of contamination. Long-term testing of ground water downstream from Site 9 has revealed the presence of volatile organic compounds, including vinyl chloride, and minerals, including iron, aluminum and manganese. Testing of ground water upstream from Site 9 has not indicated these contaminants. The Navy has not determined the source of the contamination. An incinerator was located at Site 9 until it was demolished in 1948. The area is now bisected by Neptune Drive, and a barracks, the Neptune Galley and a septic system are currently located there.

"If there is a source, it goes back probably to World War II," said Larry Dearborn, hydrogeologist with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

At a Wednesday night meeting of the Brunswick Conservation Commission, Claudia Sait, DEP project manager, expressed the state's satisfaction with the Navy's efforts.

"We think the Navy has done a good job looking for the source," she said. "We don't disagree with their proposal."

"They put a lot of holes in the ground looking for the source," added Sait, referring to the digging of test wells, which are used

to monitor the presence of contaminants in ground water. "If you can't find the source, you can't do a removal action."

The Navy proposal recommends the removal of contaminants through "natural attenuation," which means allowing them to break down through the process of natural deterioration, and conducting long-term monitoring of the sites with five-year reviews.

The DEP officials said that volatile chemicals dissipate harmlessly into the air, and minerals also break down over time and are rarely carried very far from the source.

However, Alan Houston, Brunswick natural resource planner, expressed his concern for the health of Harpswell Cove, which the ground water from Site 9 eventually empties into.

"Currently, Harpswell Cove is the most productive shellfish area in the town of Brunswick," said Houston. He proposed that a test well be established right at the mouth of the cove.

DEP officials said that any contaminants from Site 9 would be detected long before they reached Harpswell Cove, which is located about half of a mile downstream from the site. A series of test wells already are established in the area, monitoring a variety of contaminated sites.

"It almost inconceivable that anything could get by those wells without being seen," Dearborn said.

Some of the local officials present at the meeting did not share the DEP's satisfaction with the Navy. Brunswick Town Councilor Michael Feldman said his dealings with the Navy for the past three-and-a-half years have been "frustrating, to say the least." Edmund Benedikt, member of the Brunswick Conservation Commission, said the Navy proposal employed a "deceptive use of language."

However, BNAS spokesman John James told The Times Record today that the Navy has established catch basins, test wells and an alarm system for the detection of pollutants. He said the Navy has for eight years coordinated board meetings with civilian and military members, as well as representatives from the DEP and the Environmental Protection Agency, "and we have maintained open communications in an effort to be as forthcoming as possible."

"No stone is left unturned," said James, "and all our cards are on the table. We welcome public input. Please, come to the meeting."