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LETTER AND COMMENTS ON BEHALF OF SEACOAST ANTI POLLUTION LEAGUE
REGARDING DRAFT GROUNDWATER SAMPLING FOR RADIONUCLIDES NSY
PORTSMOUTH ME
12/12/1998
LEPAGE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Lepage Environmental Services, Inc.

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

December 12, 1998

Peter Vandermark
Seacoast Anti-Pollution League
P. O. Box 1136
Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03802

Subject: Review of Responses to Comments on *Draft Groundwater Sampling for Radionuclides*

Dear Mr. Vandermark:

As you requested, I have reviewed the Navy's responses to comments on the June 1998 *Draft Groundwater Sampling for Radionuclides* plan. My original comments are contained in my letter to you dated July 21, 1998. The Navy responses are dated November 13, 1998. The Navy responded to comments from the regulatory agencies under separate cover.

The majority of the Navy's responses satisfy the original questions or concerns. The remaining issues are as follows:

Original Comment 2. Pages 1 & 2, Section 2. What is the Navy's experience with analyzing environmental samples with the equipment and methods described in Section 2? Why were cobalt-60 and radium-226 selected for analysis? Are there other radioactive isotopes or materials used or in use at the Shipyard? Are daughter products of concern?

The Navy's response did not address the third and fourth questions in my original comment. Information concerning other radioactive isotopes or materials used or in use at the Shipyard, as well as daughter products, must be provided.

Original Comment 4. Page 3, Section 3. Who certifies a contractor for low-flow sampling? It appears that the contractor would collect groundwater samples using low-flow techniques. What sampling protocol or plan will be followed? Will both the EPA and the DEP be collecting split samples?

The information included in the response and the revisions to the text provide sufficient information with one exception. Who will train the contractor in the low-flow sampling procedures that will be referenced in the revised plan?

Original Comment 5. Page 3, Section 3. How will the surface water samples be collected? Is turbidity a potential problem? Why were the extreme east and west ends of the two ponds selected for sampling locations?

The Navy will include additional details on the proposed surface water (and biota) sampling in the revised plan. However, it is not clear how the surface water samples will be filtered.

Original Comment 10. Page 7, Section 8. It is not clear how the results of the sampling will be communicated to the Restoration Advisory Board. Please clarify.

The Navy's response should be incorporated in the revised text to clearly state how the Restoration Advisory Board will be provided with the results of the environmental sampling.

Additional Comment. The Navy's response to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection's fourth comment concerning background wells raises an additional question. The Navy appears to propose sampling only bedrock wells. While the Navy makes it clear that wells installed in fill material will not be sampled, it is not clear if wells completed in naturally-occurring overburden were considered as background sample locations. If overburden wells were not considered, the rationale should be provided.

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: Iver McLeod, MEDEP
Meghan Cassidy, EPA
✓ Marty Raymond, PNS
Jeffrey Brann, PNS

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November 29, 1998

Mr. Alan Robinson
Public Affairs Office
Portsmouth Naval Shipyard
Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03804-5000

Subject: Comments on October 1998 *Proposed Plan for Interim Action at Operable Unit 4*

Dear Mr. Robinson:

We are transmitting the following comments concerning the October 1998 *Proposed Plan for Interim Action at Operable Unit 4* on behalf of the Seacoast Anti-Pollution League (SAPL) to supplement oral comments recorded during the November 4, 1998, public meeting:

1. The Seacoast Anti-Pollution League is in favor of conducting additional monitoring in the offshore areas at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.
2. SAPL members have a number of concerns with the November 4, 1998, public meeting. The timing of the meeting, scheduled for the evening after election day, did not enhance public participation. Additional publicity would have also encouraged the public to attend. While the Navy did post the required public notice in local papers, this notice provides only minimal publicity. A press release (with a suggested appropriate headline) would likely have been beneficial. Here again, the timing of the meeting was such that any newspaper story printed at the last minute would have been buried in the election results. At a minimum, the Navy should send a specific notice to members of the Restoration Advisory Board.

The format of the meeting also inhibited public participation. No questions or comments were recorded during the first portion of the meeting. Attendees found it difficult to restate their positions or questions in the second half of the meeting, when public comments were recorded. In addition, the meeting was not conducted according to the format presented in the *Proposed Plan*. Page 1 of the *Proposed Plan* states: "To the extent possible, the Navy will respond to your oral comments during the November 4, 1998 public meeting." However, at the beginning of the meeting, the Navy announced that comments and questions would be recorded only after the information presentation was completed, that the Navy would not respond that evening to anything recorded, and would instead provide responses in the Responsiveness Summary in the *Interim Record of Decision for OU4*. This made for a one-sided exchange.

3. The Site Background Section on page 2 contains that statement that Site 5, the Industrial Waste Outfalls, is considered a site that only had a **potential** (emphasis added) offshore impact. This statement conflicts with information presented in earlier Navy documents. The April 1997 *Revised Draft Final Estuarine Ecological Risk Assessment* states on page 3-5 that

“Certainly contributing pollutants to the estuary, the industrial waste discharges released heavy metals, and cyanide from plating waste, PCBs, phenolic compounds, oil and grease. ... Marine sediments associated with the outfalls were sampled in 1976. Chemical analysis indicated elevated concentrations of mercury, lead, cadmium, chromium, copper, zinc, PCBs, total cyanide, phenols, and oils and grease. The contaminated sediments were dredged in 1978 and disposed in the JILF [Jamaica Island Landfill]. Sediment samples collected directly offshore of the discharge locations in 1991...contained quantifiable level[s] of only Cu, Pb, and Hg [copper, lead, and mercury] above ER-Ls [Effects Range Low].”

Clearly the Industrial Waste Outfalls have had negative historical impacts on the offshore environment. The 1991 sampling results reveal that, even after the removal of contaminated sediments by dredging, significant adverse impacts could still be detected. Furthermore, the dredged sediments were disposed in the JILF, and can continue to act as a source of contamination affecting the offshore areas adjacent to the landfill.

While it is too late to correct the text of the *Proposed Plan*, the *Interim Record of Decision for OU4* must include an accurate characterization of the negative impact Site 5 discharges have had on the offshore environment.

4. As stated in Comment 1 above, SAPL agrees with the concept of conducting additional monitoring in offshore areas. However, SAPL can not yet agree with the details of the Navy's proposed monitoring program as outlined in the July 1998 *Proposed Sampling and Analysis Program, Interim Offshore Monitoring for OU4* and presented at the August 20, 1998, technical meeting. We are still awaiting written responses to our August 14, 1998, comments on the proposed monitoring program. The following comments reiterate a number of SAPL's concerns presented in the August 14th letter:

The April 1997 *Revised Draft Final Estuarine Ecological Risk Assessment* summarized the research needed to reduce uncertainty in the results of the risk assessment and “essential monitoring studies” in Table 8-2. Additional monitoring and research needs are also outlined in the text of the *Risk Assessment* text. The *Proposed Sampling and Analysis Program, Interim Offshore Monitoring for OU4* focuses on sediment chemistry and mussel and juvenile lobster tissue, and does not address the other essential monitoring and research needs identified in the *Revised Draft Final Estuarine Ecological Risk Assessment*.

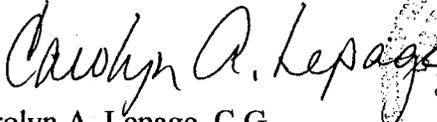
The proposed sampling frequency does not appear to address potential seasonal effects.

It is not clear how the proposed monitoring addresses the lack of eelgrass in Clark Cove, potential impacts of contaminants on salt marshes, potential impacts on winter flounder, and concerns about mobility of inorganic compounds (lead and mercury in particular).

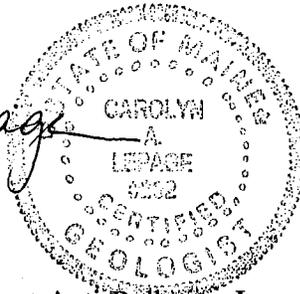
5. The offshore monitoring program should be designed to answer some of the issues and risks identified in the May 1994 *Final Human Health Risk Assessment Report for Off-Shore Media*. While the source(s) of some of the contaminants has (have) not been clearly identified, and there are shellfish bed closures and fish advisories currently in effect, the Navy shouldn't wait to start collecting additional data. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection made it clear in their September 30, 1998, letter that the State of Maine intends to eventually open all shellfishing beds and that the Navy may need to address contamination around the Shipyard as part of an overall effort (by all contributors) to reduce contamination in the river. Furthermore, the Navy and other parties should not rely on the closures and advisories as completely protecting the public from risks posed by ingesting contaminated seafood. New data generated by the proposed monitoring should be evaluated for human health risks, and the 1994 *Human Health Risk Assessment Report* should be reevaluated using data generated during the proposed monitoring.

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: Peter Vandermark, Seacoast Anti-Pollution League
Iver McLeod, Department of Environmental Protection
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✓ Marty Raymond, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard