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Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Commander Capt. Kevin M. McCoy, fifth from left, is joined by representatives from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Environmental Protection Agency, local residents in groundbreaking ceremony. Saunders/Democrat photo

Navy begins restoration of wetlands salt marsh on Jamaica Island

By JENNIFER L. SAUNDERS

Democrat Staff Writer

KITTERY, Maine — The sky cleared over a picturesque view of the Piscataqua River just as officials at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard ushered in a new era on Jamaica Island.

Representatives from the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Army Corps of Engineers and the shipyard's Restoration Advisory Board joined Shipyard Commander Capt. Kevin M. McCoy and other Navy representatives at the site of the Jamaica Island Landfill for a groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday afternoon.

"It's a pretty neat day in the Seacoast area ... On the very eve of the shipyard's 202nd anniversary, we are breaking ground and improving the wetlands... It's

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not just our responsibility, it's the right thing to do for the environment and for the future generations of the Seacoast," McCoy said.

The event marked the beginning of the Jamaica Cove Wetlands Project, the first phase of the Jamaica Island Landfill remediation. The large, multi-year environmental clean-up and construction project being completed under the Navy's Installation Restoration Program will be conducted in two phases.

The Jamaica Island Landfill was created over several decades between the 1940s and 1970s when 25 acres of former tidal mudflats between Jamaica Island and Seavey Island were filled in by the Navy. Today the landfill is made up of various fill materials including construction rubble, dredge spoils, and various materials with hazardous constituents.

Since the 1980s, noted Kenneth Plaisted, head of the shipyard's environmental division, Navy, DEP, EPA and local officials have been working together. The remediation of the landfill is being completed under the direction of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation Liability Act, commonly referred to as Superfund.

The Jamaica Island Landfill is the largest Superfund site at the shipyard. The project will be completed over several years at an estimated cost of \$10.2 million.

In Phase 1 of the remediation, a large portion of the landfill adjacent to Jamaica Cove will be excavated and consolidated with other sections of the landfill.

In the excavated area, a salt marsh wetland will be established, replacing what once existed in the area, Plaisted noted.

During the spring of 2003, the newly created wetland area will be planted with native salt marsh grasses, with native trees and shrubs, along the upper edge of the shoreline.

Phase 1 of the project is being completed by the Navy's remedial action contractor, Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation.

Phase II of the project will start in the spring of 2003, Plaisted explained. During the phase, a multi-layered hazardous waste landfill cover system will be constructed over the landfill.

Once that system is completed, a portion of the landfill will be planted and used for recreational purposes and a paved section will be used for vehicle parking and pleasure boat storage.

The remedial action taking place was selected by the Navy and Environmental Protection Agency with the concurrence of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

The Army Corps of Engineers is designing the landfill cover system and Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation will construct it.

"Throughout the years of study and planning, the community members of the Shipyard's Restoration Advisory Board have performed active roles in reviewing data, analyzing plans, and helping establish goals and priorities for the Navy,"

noted Shipyard Public Affairs Officer Alan M. Robinson.

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