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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
(INSTALLATIONS AND ENVIRONMENT)
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-1000

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NAS SOUTH WEYMOUTH
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24 February 1998

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-2101

Dear Senator Kennedy:

Thank you for your letter of January 26, 1998, to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Installations and Environment), concerning ordnance debris on Nomans Land Island, MA, and the cleanup process associated with this Navy base closure property. I am responding for Secretary Pirie.

The Base Realignment and Closure Cleanup Team at Naval Air Station South Weymouth is responsible for managing the environmental cleanup of Nomans Land Island. They have been discussing the issue of debris on the island following a recent ordnance cleanup. These piles of debris have been determined to be inert scrap metal and are no longer considered unexploded ordnance.

The Navy, with input from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, will continue investigating response options. We must balance the benefits of removing the debris with the potential for causing additional environmental damage by use of large equipment that would be required to remove it.

Our current plan is to transfer Nomans Land Island to USFWS for management as a wildlife refuge. We will carefully weigh the cleanup alternatives with input from all concerned. We plan to complete the investigation and decide whether debris removal is necessary and cost effective by October 1998.

To ensure safety, conspicuous access restrictions to Nomans Land Island will remain in effect after the Navy transfers ownership of the island to the USFWS. As part of the transfer agreement, the island will continue to have signs placed to warn unauthorized visitors coming onto the island that they are trespassing on restricted federal lands that may be contaminated with ordnance. Navigational maps note the same restricted access. The Navy will remain responsible for responding if any unexploded ordnance is discovered on the island in the future.

I appreciate your continuing interest in the interagency transfer and reuse of Nomans Land Island. As always, if I may be of any further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Diana H. Josephson

DIANA H. JOSEPHSON
Principal Deputy