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NAVY MAYPORT NEWS

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Lean, mean Marines told to leave sea oats green

By Susan P. Respass

Staff writer

When the Marines land on the beaches at Mayport Naval Station next month for amphibious training, they'll have to use a kinder, gentler assault.

When storming the dunes with troops and tracked vehicles, the Navy has told the Marines to watch out for the newly planted sea oats. And don't knock over the sand fences.

The sea oats and fences are part of a beach and dunes restoration completed last month by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The corps deposited about 300,000 cubic yards of sand along 1.5 miles of the Navy's Mayport beachfront.

Capt. A.G. Long, the base's commanding officer, issued landing instructions in a letter sent yesterday to the 4th Assault Amphibian Battalion reserve unit based at Jacksonville

Naval Air Station.

In the letter, Long grants the Marines permission to conduct amphibious training on the surf and beach Aug. 15. But he asks that a Marine unit representative scout the newly restored beach with a Mayport official before the landing.

"Access to the beach will be limited solely via the existing road next to the jetty through the dune area," the letter states. "No damage must be done to existing dunes, fences and newly planted sea oats."

The Marine training will be restricted to a 1,025-foot area of beach south of the jetty, Long wrote.

The Marine reserve unit, which sought permission for the beach training, could not be reached for comment yesterday.

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Florida Times-Union

Beaches Leader

Navy Times

Marine assault on Mayport to be environmentally safe

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Lt. Bob Hines, Mayport base spokesman, said the restrictions are part of Mayport's efforts to protect the base's environment and the newly renourished beach, which widened by about 80 feet last month when sand was dredged from the St. Johns river in a channel maintenance project.

Hines said sea oats were planted to help stabilize the refurbished dunes. A temporary irrigation system was

installed in the dunes to water the sea oats until they become rooted.

The Navy built several walkways across the dunes along major pedestrian routes, Hines said.

The Navy, which has been trying to boost its environmental efforts, has a new position — assistant secretary of the Navy for installations and environment — filled by Jacqueline E. Schafer in a presidential appointment March 12.

Ms. Schafer selected Mayport as the site to formally sign a wetlands pro-

tection agreement June 26 with the U.S. Department of the Interior that affects 182 Navy bases.

Under the agreement, the Navy will reimburse the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service up to \$1 million to identify and classify Navy wetlands. Mayport Naval Station, which has 1,400 acres of wetlands, is to be one of the first bases set for mapping, Hines said.

The Navy already has natural resources professionals who manage wetlands and are being trained in

wetlands identification and restoration by the Army Corps of Engineers. The new mapping program is intended to help the Navy protect and expand wetland areas at its bases.

Eight other Navy bases in Florida will be mapped, including Jacksonville and Cecil Field naval air stations. Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base in Southeast Georgia, which has 3,000 acres of wetlands, also will be mapped, a Kings Bay spokesman said yesterday.