

Panel advises NAS on toxic sites

By Brad Barnes
News Journal staff writer

- Five residents chosen to advise Pensacola Naval Air Station on Superfund cleanup sites toured the base's 42 hot spots for the first time Saturday.

They talked among themselves, consulted maps and every now and then leaned over a worker taking a soil sample to ask questions.

The five include a retired base maintenance manager, lawyers and a coastal biologist — all on the board out of concern for the community.

"The whole idea of the board is to provide an interface between the public and the Navy," said John Early, co-chairman of the group. "The Navy wants the people to feel that they're a part of it and not in this vacuum."

The base formed the Restoration Advisory Board last month. It will meet on base monthly; the public is encouraged to attend. Members will advise the Navy of the community's concerns and what they think priorities should be.

Pensacola NAS was placed on the National Priorities List, called Superfund, in 1990 after an Environmental Protection Agency field investigation.

Soil and water contamination on

WANT TO GO?

- **WHAT:** Meeting of the Pensacola NAS Restoration Advisory Board
- **WHEN:** 5:30 p.m. Tuesday
- **WHERE:** C.O. Building, Pensacola NAS, (near McDonald's)
- **DETAILS:** 452-2311

the site stems from several sources. Sewer lines have leaked harmful solvents or other chemicals used in former paint-stripping shops. Old underground oil-sludge storage tanks may have leaked. In one case, 50 gallons of oil were spilled onto a street.

In most cases, the damage is below the surface. The only signs of trouble are the metal well covers bored into the ground.

Being on the Superfund list guarantees federal funding for cleanups. The cost to fix all of the sites will exceed \$110 million.

Available money is being spent to evaluate the sites for size and seriousness.

"It's kind of like the grand jury indicting somebody," Early said. "The money for cleanup is going to come later, after the sites have been identified."

ADVISORY BOARD

The board was created in September to help keep the community apprised of the Superfund cleanup efforts at Pensacola Naval Air Station.

- **John Early**, community co-chair, 458-4111
- **Lisa Minshew**, alternate community co-chair, 434-6859
- **Thomas McAlpin**, 432-4420
- **Jesse Higby**, 434-9200
- **Jerry Westmoreland**, 492-2820

Pensacola NAS is one of several Northwest Florida Superfund sites, including Whiting Field in Santa Rosa County and former plants where chemicals were used, such as Escambia Wood Treating Co. and Agrico Chemical in Pensacola.

For Early, volunteering on the board has brought him full circle from the days when he worked as maintenance engineer for the base's commanding officer.

"I remember driving by one of these sites and seeing them burn trash in what's now a closed waste dump," he said. "At the time we thought nothing of it"