

Pensacola News Journal
Sunday April 20, '97

VIEWPOINT

Navy working hard to clean up pollution from its past operations

The mission of Naval Air Station Pensacola is to support naval air training by providing facilities, services and maintenance support for training squadrons and other commands. During much of its almost 170-year history, the base conducted industrial-related operations that required the use of a wide variety of materials that we now know to be hazardous. These included plating materials, metals, cleaning solvents and petroleum-based compounds that have the potential to pollute the environment.

In December 1989, NAS was placed on the Environmental Protection Agency's National Priorities List (NPL) of sites that require environmental assessment and clean-up. Although these sites are commonly referred to as "Superfund" sites, NAS will be cleaned up using funds from the Department of Defense budget.



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The DoD program responsible for cleaning up contamination by hazardous substances is the Installation Restoration Program (IRP). NAS is an active and energetic participant in the IRP. Through the fiscal year 1997 budget (ending Sept. 30) \$22 million had been set aside for the IRP assessment and clean-up activities aboard the base.

Assessment activities have been completed at many of the 44 sepa-

rately identified sites, and clean-up work has been completed at some of these sites. Assessment activities to determine the extent and nature of the contamination is on-going at the remainder of these sites.

In fiscal year 1995 alone, approximately \$2.1 million was spent on assessment and clean-up activities at NAS Pensacola under the IRP.

The IRP requires a cooperative effort between the Navy (as lead agency), the EPA, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. This cooperative effort has worked exceptionally well at NAS Pensacola.

In order to enhance the cooperative approach, representatives of each of these agencies, along with representatives of the private firms contracted to perform assessment and clean-up activities, meet monthly as a joint decision-making group overseeing the IRP.

Problems are identified early so that solutions can be found to save time and money.

NAS Pensacola recognizes that the public has an interest in ensuring that the Navy does a good job protecting the base environment and remediating past problems. NAS Pensacola is almost surrounded by navigable waterways used by the public. These water bodies could have been impacted by waste disposal practices considered acceptable years ago. Therefore, as part of the IRP, these adjacent water bodies will also be studied, just as sites physically aboard NAS Pensacola are studied during the assessment process.

NAS Pensacola desires input and suggestions from the public. Clean-up plans are presented to the public for review and comment before the plans are finalized.

In addition, to enhance the public awareness of the IRP and to in-

crease public involvement and access to information, NAS Pensacola has created a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) comprised of private citizens and Navy representatives. The mission of the RAB is to establish and facilitate a forum with the community, regulators and NAS Pensacola for the exchange of information in an open and interactive dialogue concerning the base's environmental restoration program. The RAB is an adjunct to, but not a replacement for, the public input forums required by federal and state law.

The NAS Pensacola Restoration Advisory Board consists of between five and eight members. Members were initially selected by the base from applications. The goal was to obtain broad-based representation from the community. Future members will be selected by the RAB pursuant to the RAB's charter.

NAS Pensacola encourages your participation and involvement in the process of improving the environmental status of the base. The RAB meets at least bi-monthly. Notice of the meeting is provided in the Pensacola News Journal. All meetings are open to the public.

You can also become involved by calling any member of the RAB to ask questions or express concerns. Current RAB members are: Lisa S. Minshe, 434-6859; John Early, 456-4111; Jerry Westmoreland, 492-2820; and Jesse W. Rigby, 434-9200.

Another option is to contact Ron Joyner at the NAS Pensacola Environmental Office (452-3900). Ron will ensure that your comments are forwarded to the board.

Lisa S. Minshe is co-chairperson of the Restoration Advisory Board at Naval Air Station Pensacola.

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