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Suit Claims Navy Polluted S.F. Bay, Treasure Island

Environmental groups cite oil, diesel fuel leaks

By Reynolds Holding
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Environmental groups sued the U.S. Navy yesterday for allegedly polluting Treasure Island and San Francisco Bay with oil and diesel fuel leaked from storage tanks and pipelines.

The suit, filed in the U.S. District Court in San Francisco, cites Navy documents in charging that 28 underground storage tanks, 12 aboveground tanks and more than three miles of pipeline on Treasure Island have leaked substantial amounts of fuel. The pollutants have seeped into the ground and flowed into the bay through 59 storm drains, the suit contends.

In all, the suit says, the Navy is liable for 464,000 violations of federal environmental law. If found guilty, the Navy could face millions of dollars in fines.

"The Navy has turned Treasure Island into a huge, oil-soaked sponge," said Michael Lozeau, executive director of San Francisco BayKeeper, which filed the suit with Arc Ecology.

Ken McNeill, a spokesman for the naval station on Treasure Is-

land, said he could not comment directly on the lawsuit.

The Navy has an "ongoing investigation and remedial cleanup of sites out here," McNeill said. "We are working on all of this in cooperation with the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and intend to restore our installation to its pristine condition."

Yesterday's suit amends a complaint filed last August contending that the Navy's sewage-treatment plant on Treasure Island has spewed toxic wastes into the bay. It is the latest effort by the two environmental groups to make the Navy clean up various bases around the Bay Area.

A similar suit alleging environmental violations at the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard was filed in 1994, and the groups are pushing for clean-up measures at Alameda Naval Station, Point Molate Naval Fuel Depot in Richmond and Mare Island Naval Shipyard.

The situation on Treasure Island is particularly urgent because the Navy is scheduled to give San Francisco control of the property in 1997, according to Lozeau.