NPL Site Narrative for Washington Navy Yard

WASHINGTON NAVY YARD
Washington, District of Columbia

Conditions at Proposal (March 1998): The Washington Navy Yard (WNY) is the oldest continuously operated Navy facility in the United States. It currently occupies 71.5 acres in the District of Columbia. The facility was opened officially on October 2, 1799. By 1812, it was well equipped for the purpose of shipbuilding and repair. During the 1800s, ordnance production, research, and other industrial activities were prevalent at the yard. In 1886, the WNY was redesignated as the Naval Gun Factory. During the next 20 years considerable expansion of the WNY occurred. Production of ordnance remained the primary operational activity at the facility during this time. To accommodate the WNY, significant areas of adjacent marshlands were filled in.

In the 1940s, the primary role of the WNY shifted from production of ordnance to administrative activities. Although administrative activities became a large function of the WNY, all ordnance production still was monitored or tested at the facility. To accommodate the expanded activity, new administrative and research facilities were constructed on the eastern portion of the facility. In 1961, the WNY officially became an administrative facility. Activities currently conducted at the WNY include administration, supply and storage, and training. An historic center that is open to the public is also currently located at the WNY.

Records documenting the wastes generated during ordnance production or the various other industrial processes that occurred at the WNY have not been located. However, based on the descriptions of the documented operations at the WNY the typical wastes generated can be reasonably determined. These wastes would include metals used in ordnance production and paint-spraying; solvents used in cleaning; cyanide and phenols used in cooling processes; creosote used in wood treatment; petroleum products and wastes; and PCB-containing oils in storage tanks and electrical equipment. Contamination also likely occurred during storage and handling of raw materials.

The storm water system draining the facility is contaminated with metals and PCBs, which can be attributed to the industrial processes and ordnance production that historically occurred at the facility. The storm water system leads to nine outfalls into the Anacostia River. Sediment sampling of the Anacostia River in the area of the WNY shows metals and PCB contamination. In addition, volatile and semi-volatile contaminants have been found in soils throughout the facility, although sufficient documentation does not exist to fully evaluate this contamination at this time.

Status (July 1998): Remedial activities currently in progress involve the investigation and removal of contaminated sediments from the stormwater system.

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. ATSDR ToxFAQs can be found on the Internet at ATSDR - ToxFAQs (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp) or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.