

USN Bloodsworth Island (Archipelago) Dorchester County, Maryland

Site Location

The USN Bloodsworth Island (BWI) is located in Dorchester County near the convergence of Fishing Bay, the Nanticoke River and the Honga River. This island covers an area of approximately 25 square miles. BWI, along with South Marsh Island and Smith Island, form the boundary for the Tangier Sound near the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.

Site History

Bloodsworth Island was purchased by the United States Navy in 1942 and immediately put to use as a training ground for both surface forces and aircraft. Most of the island was designated as an impact zone for naval and aircraft bombardment. Between the years of 1942 and 1967, it is estimated that 230,000 rounds were fired at the island from surface ships alone.

Training activities on BWI reached their peak during the early 1970s, in support of the Vietnam conflict. Through the late 1980s, BWI was also used for Naval gunfire support exercises involving simulation of shore bombardments in support of amphibious landings.

Until October 1995, the Air Force and Air National Guard used BWI for air to ground training (ordnance included: machine gun ammunition, explosive bombs, smoke bombs and rockets). At the end of 1995, all bombing activity ceased and the Navy restricted the use of BWI to "Navy mission essential training and testing."

The Navy has indicated that BWI will be transferred to the command of Patuxent River Naval Air Station. Current plans are to use BWI for non-explosive testing.

Environmental Investigations

The Navy's 1981 Site Assessment (SA) of BWI states "The entire Bloodsworth Archipelago must be considered completely contaminated with an unknown quantity of unknown types of unexploded ordnance (UXO)."

In response to this statement, the Navy conducted a Preliminary Assessment (PA) of BWI in 1988. This PA recommended No Further Action (NFA), indicating that scrap metal and UXO are periodically removed and or decontaminated for resale by the Defense Logistics Agency.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) along with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) recommended that additional sampling be performed in order to confirm that NFA was warranted at this site. In 2001, the Navy initiated a Site Investigation (SI) in response to the EPA's and MDE's concerns. This SI included samples of soil, sediment and surface water. For soil, arsenic, aluminum, iron and 1,3,5-trinitrobenzene exceeded residential risk based concentrations (RBCs). For sediment, no exceedances were recorded. For surface water, copper, mercury, silver and thallium exceeded the Clean Water Ambient Water Quality Criteria for the protection of aquatic life, and thallium exceeded the Ambient Water Quality Criteria for water and fish consumption for the protection of human health.

Current Status

Possible future actions at this site might include: official HRS scoring, a removal action or additional sampling to strengthen the background data set.

Contact

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