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The Sunday Capital

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SPECIAL REPORT: FORT MEADE CLEANUP



Photos by Pamela Wood — The Capital
ABOVE AND RIGHT: Signs for the Patuxent Research Refuge's North Tract warn visitors about unexploded ordnance. The property once was part of Fort George G. Meade.



Capital file photo by J. Henson
ABOVE: This 2000 photo shows a monitoring well at Fort George G. Meade in west county. Groundwater contamination is one of the serious environmental problems at the post.

3 shot outside Odenton nightclub

Suspect arrested; police say 2 bystanders among injured

By SCOTT DAUGHERTY
Staff Writer

A Baltimore County man was arrested early yesterday morning after allegedly shooting three people — including two bystanders — outside an Odenton bar, county police said.

James Edward Jones, 23, of Halethorpe, was charged with three counts of attempted first-degree murder in connection with the melee that transpired at about 1:45 a.m. outside My Place Bar & Lounge, 1676 Annapolis Road.

Lt. Michael Brothers, a spokesman for the county Police Department, declined yesterday to discuss what prompted the shooting, which occurred behind a strip of nightclubs and restaurants that have been marred in recent years by several homicides and other high-profile incidents of violence.

According to police, Jones shot Antwone James Hooper, 19, of Baltimore, after an altercation at the entrance of the bar.

Brothers said surveillance video shows Jones pulling out a revolver and chasing Hooper around several cars in the parking lot before shooting him behind the business.

Jones fired several shots, hitting Hooper in the head, back and abdomen, according to police. The other two victims — neither of whom were identified yesterday — were struck by stray bullets, Brothers said.

Hooper and one of the bystanders were taken to the Maryland Shock Trauma Center in Baltimore. The other bystander was taken to Baltimore Washington Medical Center in Glen Burnie.

Brothers said Hooper was in "stable condition." He added that the injuries of the two



JONES

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‘We have to fix it’

Fort Meade environmental cleanup finally moves forward

By PAMELA WOOD
Staff Writer

In 2003, construction workers tore down trees to make way for new homes at Fort George G. Meade.

As they dug up the stumps, they made a startling discovery: trash. Lots and lots of trash. Animal bones. Shoes. Military dog tags. Bricks. Wood. Glass.

The workers had stumbled upon a forgotten landfill that dated to the 1940s.

An investigation that followed found that the dump stretched onto the property of Manor View Elementary School next door. Investigators also found high levels of methane — which was so dangerous that in December 2005, they evacuated 12 families from their brand-new homes. Seven years later, the homes still sit empty. “No

(See MEADE, Page A12)

• An in-depth look at the cleanup. Pages A12-13



By Paul W. Gillespie — The Capital

Fort George G. Meade has a lengthy history of environmental problems, including contaminated soil and groundwater from old landfills, industrial operations and troop training activities. After years of delay, the Army and environmental officials say they finally are on the same page when it comes to cleaning up the west county installation.

Boating safety restrictions a hard sell in many states

Some don't require boater education or life jackets for kids

By ARIEL ZIRULNICK
Capital News Service-News 21

Seventeen years ago, federal officials urged all states to require boater education courses and life jackets for children.

Today, 13 states still don't require boaters to learn how to

drive a boat before they hit the water. And two states — Virginia and Wisconsin — don't require children to wear life jackets on boats despite more than a decade of pressure from the nation's top transportation safety agency.

In 2008, there were more than 4,700 recreational boating accidents leading to 709 fatalities in the United States, according to U.S. Coast Guard statistics.

“It's a very serious issue and it's one we can impact,” said

Bill Gossard, recreational boating coordinator for the National Transportation Safety Board. “We have a better shot saving lives here than other places.”

Maryland, by contrast, has been among the leading states in boating safety education. The state began requiring courses for some boaters starting July 1, 1988 — well before the feds began pushing for boater training.

Yet Natural Resources Police

(See BOAT, Page A11)

MARYLAND'S BOATING SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

While some states continue to lag in mandating boater safety education, Maryland has been among the leaders. According to the Natural Resources Police, since July 1, 1988, it has required that:

- Anyone born on or after July 1, 1972, must have a Certificate of Boating Safety Education to operate a boat or personal watercraft, or PWC.
- Those under 16 operating a motorized boat 11 feet or more in length who do not have a valid Certificate of Boating Safety Education must be supervised by someone at least 18.
- Those younger than 16 may not operate a PWC, even with a certificate.

Boating safety courses are available year-round in the area. Some are offered by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 23-1, Annapolis.

For details, visit <http://fl05s2301.org/> and click on the Boating Education/Courses link under the Preparation category.

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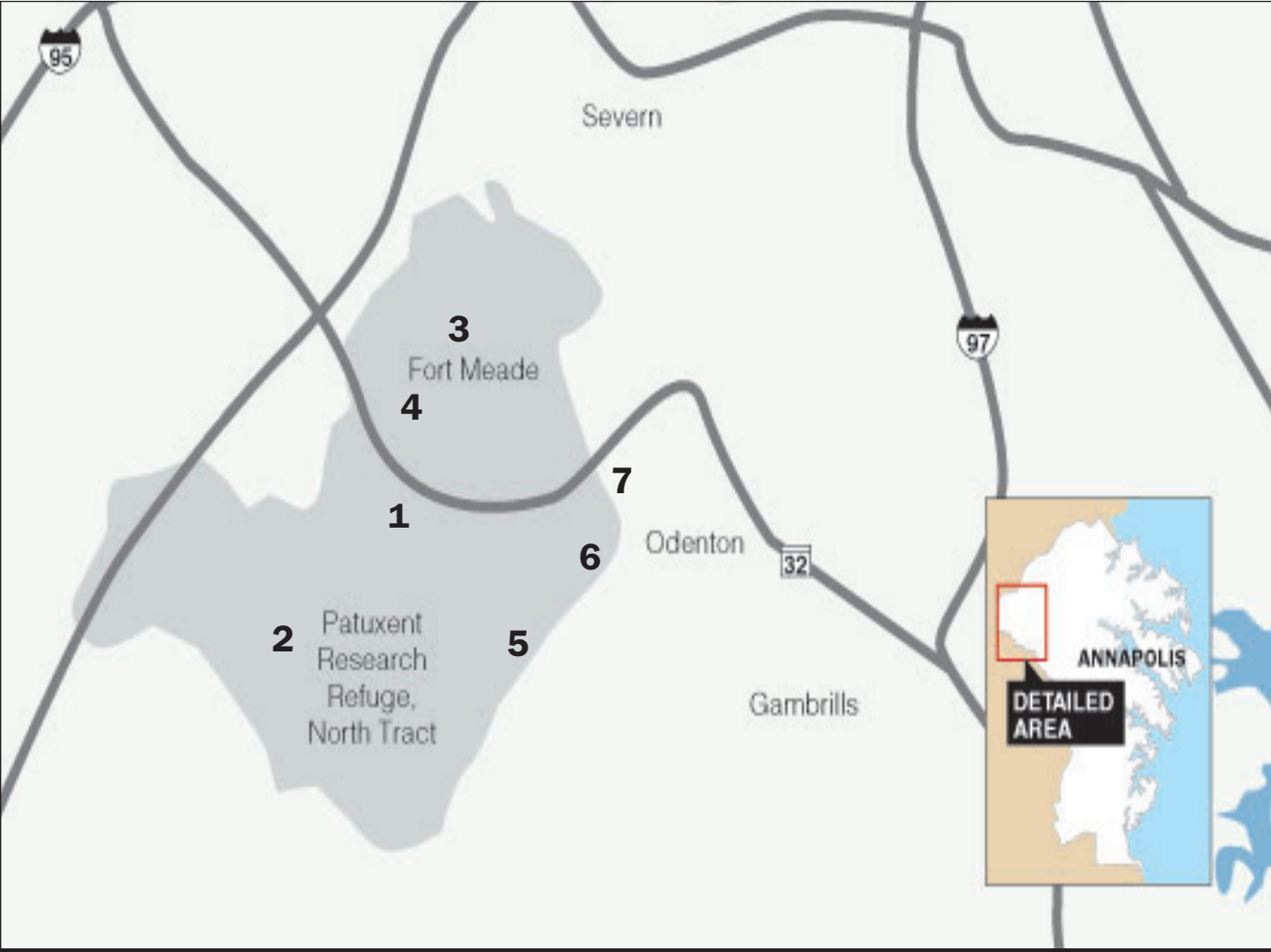
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SPECIAL REPORT: FORT MEADE CLEANUP

FORT MEADE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

Fort George G. Meade, the sprawling military installation in west county, has a history of contamination. During World War I and World War II, troop training activities left behind unexploded ordnance that’s now buried in the ground. Other contamination includes old, unlined landfills and chemicals in the soil and groundwater. Here are seven of the more than 100 locations that have been investigated as part of ongoing cleanup efforts. For a complete map with all locations, visit www.HometownAnnapolis.com.



1. Tipton Airport

Formerly known as Tipton Army Airfield, this parcel was transferred to Anne Arundel County in the late 1990s. The site’s problems include three former landfills.

2. Patuxent Research Refuge North Tract

Thousands of acres of land were transferred to the U.S. Department of the Interior in the early 1990s to be added to the Patuxent Research Refuge. Unexploded ordnance has been found on site.

3. Manor View Dump Site

In 2003, construction workers discovered an old, 1940s-era dump while building homes behind Manor View Elementary School. High levels of methane forced evacuation of several homes in 2005. It’s possible that the dump eventually will be removed.

4. Golf Course

The golf course, also known as “Site M,” is planned to be developed for additional offices for the National Security Agency. The golf course has environmental problems, though, including possible dump sites. It also was once the site of a mortar range.

5. Clean Fill Dump

The Clean Fill Dump covers 13 acres and was used from 1972 until 1985, although unregulated dumping continued after 1985. Some of the waste has been removed and transfer to the Department of the Interior is pending.

6. Closed Sanitary Landfill

The landfill operated from 1958 until 1996. The site has been suspected as the cause of contamination in nearby Odenton homes, but tests have not pointed to the landfill as the source. A feasibility study will be completed for the landfill this year, as groundwater monitoring and methane collection continue.

7. Nevada Avenue Water

An investigation is under way to determine if contamination in drinking wells on Nevada Avenue is due to Army activities.

MEADE

(Continued from Page A1)

“parking” signs are posted out front. Contractors, military officials and environmental regulators continue to study and discuss the site.

And the dump is still there. The Manor View dump is not Fort Meade’s only environmental problem. It’s likely not the most serious problem, either.

In fact, the sprawling west county installation has dozens of contaminated sites — the result of troop training activities going back to World War I.

Fort Meade has old landfills, buried grenades and ammunition, and underground oil tanks that leaked.

Firing ranges, motor pools and dry cleaners that no longer exist have left behind chemical legacies.

Dangerous compounds with polysyllabic names have contaminated the soil and the groundwater — to the extent that some residents outside of the post’s gates have been provided drinking water because their wells may be unsafe.

“The bottom line is we need our sites cleaned up,” said Paul Fluck, the civilian in charge of Fort Meade’s restoration program.

But for years, the Army dragged its feet when it came to addressing contamination, environmental officials say.

Only after a federal lawsuit did the Army finally commit last year to cleaning up Fort Meade’s environmental sins once and for all.

Troop training

Fort Meade’s story is not unique among military facilities.

For generations, soldiers didn’t know what damage they were doing to the land and water. While preparing for world wars, this problem wasn’t a high priority.

Fort Meade was founded as Camp Meade on west county farmland in 1917. More than 400,000 men passed through Meade for training on their way to World War I, followed by another 3.5 million soldiers during World War II.

Wartime training included maneuvering tanks and equipment, and firing weapons at shooting ranges and mortar ranges. In many cases, it appears the soldiers left behind debris — spent bullets and unexploded ordnance.

During the wartime booms, buildings shot up around the post to handle the day-to-day necessities of the bustling post: barracks, landfills, dental clinics, motor pools, vehicle repair areas and dry cleaning and laundry facilities. They were all built before modern environmental laws.

“The way we did things in the past is no longer acceptable,” Fluck said.

Fluck compared Fort Meade’s contamination, with the exception

of the unexploded ordnance, to that of any other small city. Just like a city, the post has industrial areas, commercial areas, residential areas — each with its own potential for environmental problems.

Industrial activities can involve chemicals being dumped into the soil or groundwater. Tank and vehicle repair shops can spill oil. Underground tanks of heating oil can leak. Landfills didn’t have liners. Ad-hoc dump sites developed in wooded areas.

David Tibbetts, who lives in Odenton and leads a community cleanup committee, said he was struck by the tales of how the contamination was caused.

“I was surprised how much history matters,” he said. “This wasn’t put here out of evil intent. This was people doing things to save our country.”

Bob Morton, an Odenton resident who used to be involved in cleanup oversight, said Meade’s environmental problems, while unintentional, are serious.

“We have to fix it,” he said. “We have truly screwed this area up.”

Health hazards

In some cases, the contamination in the Fort Meade area is dangerous.

In the mid-1990s, the herbicide atrazine turned up in private drinking-water wells in Odenton. Because the site was just east of an old post landfill, the Army was fingered as the possible culprit.

Ultimately, the county government extended public water service to the area, and it later was found the landfill likely wasn’t the source of the contaminants.

More recently, off-post monitoring wells in Odenton showed contamination of carbon tetrachloride and tetrachloroethylene, or PCE, in 2008 and 2009. An investigation is ongoing, and several private wells have been tested during the past few years.

Meanwhile, the families are provided drinking water by the Army — even though the scientific investigation hasn’t indicated whether Fort Meade is the source.

In some cases, the Army mitigates the danger to workers, residents and visitors by simply keeping them away from contaminated areas and making sure the groundwater isn’t tapped as a source of drinking water.

One component of the cleanup efforts involves assessing the human health risk for someone who lives or works directly on a contaminated site. Keeping people out minimizes risk.

In the case of the North Tract of the Patuxent Research Refuge — which includes thousands of acres that were transferred from Fort Meade in the 1990s — signs warn visitors that they might stumble upon grenades or other military munitions. Visitors must sign a paper acknowledging that they understand the risk.

For the most part, though, Fort Meade’s environmental problems remain hidden from public view. The chemicals and contaminants are in the groundwater or deep in the soil. Many of the old buildings have been razed.

In all, the cleanup effort is divided into about three dozen sites, called “operable units” in government lingo. But two of those operable units encompass more than 100 sites where it isn’t known if there is contamination.

The Army is checking every location on post where there’s even a remote possibility of a problem — for example, any spot that ever showed up as a possible dump on old aerial photos or any spot where vehicles were stored or maintained.

Fluck said the effort to seek out contaminated sites is a reflection of the intent of Army officials to be “good stewards.”

Superfund listing

But according to some involved in the Fort Meade cleanup effort, the Army hasn’t always been a good steward.

It has been clear for many decades that Fort Meade has serious environmental problems.

There were attempts at cleaning up some sites over the years, including when Tipton Airport — home of three old landfills — was turned over to the county and thousands of acres of woods were transferred to the Patuxent Research Refuge in the 1990s.

Things didn’t get serious, though, until 1998, when Fort Meade was placed on the Superfund list of the nation’s most polluted sites.

Inclusion on the list — officially called the National Priorities List — gives federal environmental officials more oversight powers. And it makes a site eligible for certain federal cleanup funds.

At the time of the Superfund listing, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials said the Army wasn’t organized and disagreed with pollution standards. The Army lacked a plan and a timetable for assessing and cleaning up polluted areas, according to reports in *The Capital*.

But even following the Superfund designation, cleanup progress didn’t improve enough to meet the EPA’s expectations. The Army refused to sign a document called a Federal Facility Agreement, which spells out the military’s obligations.

James Daniel, who oversees cleanup projects for the U.S. Army Environmental Command, said the sticking point with Fort Meade was whether the agreement should cover lands that had been transferred out of Army hands — such as the wildlife refuge and another parcel now owned by the U.S. Architect of the Capitol that’s used for storing federal records.

The Army contended that those sites were removed from the Army’s control before Fort Meade landed on the Superfund list, and

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FORT GEORGE G. MEADE TIMELINE

1917

Camp Meade is established on west county farmland to train troops for World War I. The site is chosen because it is near Washington, D.C., a railroad line and Baltimore’s port. It is named for Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade, the Pennsylvanian who commanded Union forces at the Battle of Gettysburg in the Civil War. More than 400,000 soldiers pass through Meade during World War I.

1928

After Meade is renamed Fort Leonard Wood — after a former Army chief of staff from New England — Pennsylvania congressmen object. They hold up Army appropriations until the site is renamed Fort George G. Meade.

1942-1946

Fort Meade becomes a major training center during World War II. About 3.5 million men in more than 200 units pass through Fort Meade. The fort also was used to house German and Italian prisoners of war.

Early 1980s

The Army begins investigating environmental problems.

1998

The Base Realignment and Closure process, or BRAC, identifies 9,000 acres at Fort Meade to be closed. Most of the land is transferred to the Department of the Interior to become the Patuxent Research Refuge North Tract.

1990-1991

Army Reserve and National Guard units pass through Fort Meade for call-ups in support of Operation Desert Shield. Two active-duty units based at Meade are sent to the Middle East for Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm.

1994

Tipton Army Airfield is deemed surplus and is eventually transferred to Anne Arundel County to become Tipton Airport.

The herbicide atrazine shows up in some private wells in Odenton. The county government eventually extends public water service to the area. Though Fort Meade is initially fingered as a potential culprit because of a closed Army landfill nearby, it eventually is ruled out as the source.

1998

Fort Meade is added to the Superfund list of the nation’s most polluted sites.

2003

During construction of privatized military family housing, workers discover an old dump near Manor View Elementary School.

2005

Twenty homes near the Manor View dump site are deemed unsafe because of methane levels. Twelve families are relocated.

Another round of BRAC decides to bring thousands of jobs to the fort.

2007

The Environmental Protection Agency, frustrated at the Army’s refusal to sign a Federal Facility Agreement to guide cleanup efforts, issues an administrative cleanup order. The Army fights the order.

Fort Meade proposes building an incinerator to burn sewage sludge near the intersection of Route 198 and Route 32. It cancels the plans after a public outcry.

2008

The Army agrees to comply with the EPA administrative cleanup order but misses several deadlines. The state of Maryland sues the Army in federal court to try to force compliance.

2009

The Army agrees to sign the Federal Facility Agreement. The EPA withdraws its previous administrative order. Maryland withdraws its lawsuit.

Off-post monitoring wells in Odenton show contamination. This time, the contaminant is tetrachloroethene, or PCE, which is associated with petroleum and degreasers.

Today

Fort Meade covers 5,067 acres and supports “critical national security missions,” including 80 tenant organizations from various branches of the military and government. It is the county’s largest employer, with 48,000 workers. The installation is preparing for an influx of workers arriving as a result of the 2005 BRAC.

The Army still is testing private wells to determine the scope and cause of the PCE contamination in Odenton. Drinking water is provided to some homes.

Sources: Fort Meade website, Federal Facility Agreement, Anne Arundel County Economic Development Corp., Capital-Gazette archives, federal court records, interviews.

SPECIAL REPORT: FORT MEADE CLEANUP

Community cleanup board seeks new start

By PAMELA WOOD
Staff Writer

Faced with serious, long-term environmental problems, Army officials say they're doing their best to get information to people who live or work on and around Fort George G. Meade.

The Army has long sponsored a group called the Restoration Advisory Board as a means to share information about the cleanup. Fort Meade is on the Superfund list of the nation's most polluted sites.

The Restoration Advisory Board includes military environmental officials and local residents and workers. The board is co-chaired by an Army official and a community member.

The board — dubbed “the RAB” — meets every other month.

“The RAB acts as a forum to communicate with the public who we are and what we're doing,” said Paul Fluck, who oversees the environmental restoration efforts for Fort

Meade.

But the RAB floundered for a while. In the past year, some meetings included just one or two community board members, who were outnumbered by up to 20 officials from the Army, contractors and environmental agencies.

“We had allowed community participation to dwindle,” said Bob Morton, an Odenton resident who stepped down as RAB co-chairman earlier this year because of time constraints.

Throughout this year, the Army has been trying to boost interest in the RAB.

Meetings are open to the public. Those who want to join and become official RAB members have to complete an application process and be voted in by current community members of the RAB.

This fall, Odenton resident and civic activist David Tibbetts was elected as the new co-chairman and four new members joined.

But getting involved with the RAB is not a

walk in the park.

For a long time, meetings were held in a cramped conference room in a foreboding building with a sign on the door reading, “This is not an entrance.”

Earlier this year, however, meetings were moved to the bright new Capt. John Smathers Army Reserve Center on Route 175.

Meetings involve contractors describing polluted sites with a dizzying litany of scientific lingo — PCE, TCE, UXO, OU, ROD, RI/FS. At November's meeting, some of the new members asked presenters to describe things in plain English and to repeat the history of the sites.

To help with the complex presentations, the Army has been posting meeting agendas and PowerPoint presentations online. That way, RAB members and guests can read through them ahead of time.

Many past reports and studies related to Fort Meade are archived at the West County

Area Library in Odenton. The second floor of the library has several shelves packed with thick binders about the Fort Meade cleanup effort.

Also, the community members of the RAB are considering using an Army program that allows them to hire their own environmental consultant.

Tibbetts, who has been involved with the RAB since 2003, has worked as a lawyer in environment-related jobs. He remembered how challenging his first few meetings were.

“I had a 20-year environmental background and I thought, ‘My God, this stuff is complicated,’ ” he said.

The next Restoration Advisory Board meeting will be at 7 p.m. Jan. 20 at the Capt. John Smathers Army Reserve Center on Route 175, near 21st Street. For information, visit www.fortmeade-ems.org and click on “RAB” at the left.

pwood@capitalgazette.com

MEADE

(Continued from Page A12)

therefore shouldn't be included.

“That was the initial disagreement,” Daniel said.

Similar disagreements were playing out at military installations around the country, Daniel said. But he emphasized that even with the disagreements, testing and monitoring and cleanup activities at Meade and elsewhere continued.

U.S. Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin, D-Md., who had represented the area as a congressman for two decades, said the Army was not focused on cleanup efforts at all.

“There was a lot of bureaucratic problems coming out of the Pentagon about cleanup sites, not just Fort Meade,” he said.

‘Dragging their feet’

By 2007, the EPA had enough with the Army's delays on Fort Meade.

The EPA used a federal law called the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act to issue an administrative order requiring the cleanup.

The order was issued after the EPA decided there was an “immediate and substantial endangerment” to people on- and off-post, said Ben Mykijewycz, who oversees Superfund sites in the Mid-Atlantic region for the EPA. “Up until that time, the Army was kind of dragging their feet,” Mykijewycz said.

With the order, he said, Meade's problems have “been raised to their highest levels. They finally realized how serious some of these issues are.”

Even so, the Army did not follow the terms of the order, blowing several deadlines for filing reports and plans.

In 2008, Maryland Attorney General Doug Gansler filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of the citizens of Maryland to compel the Army to follow the cleanup order.

“We didn't sue the Army lightly,” explained Steve Johnson, a top environmental lawyer in Gansler's office. “For some reason, there was a reluctance, an unwillingness from Fort Meade.”

Johnson said it didn't seem as though the Army would ever sign



Capital file photo by G. Nick Lundsков

Crews work on a lining at a municipal landfill at Fort George G. Meade in 1998. Old landfills and dumps have been a source of environmental contamination at Fort Meade.

onto a Federal Facility Agreement. The lawsuit was necessary to force action, he said.

“We expected that the lawsuit would end up pushing the Army to enter the FFA in relatively short order,” Johnson said.

And it worked.

After months and months of negotiation, the Army signed a Federal Facility Agreement in 2009. The agreement included the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Architect of the Capitol as co-signers, in order to cover the contaminated properties they had received from the Army.

The lawsuit and the previous EPA cleanup order were withdrawn.

‘Back to business’

Since 2009, there has been a renewed enthusiasm for improving the environmental situation at

Fort Meade, according to involved parties.

Instead of fighting over details, the agencies are working hand-in-hand to accelerate the cleanup.

“Things are going a lot better,” said John Burchette, an EPA official who works on the Fort Meade cleanup.

“We now have enforceable timelines. That helps a lot. EPA and the Army have been meeting quite frequently to discuss how we are going to clean up these sites. It's progressing a little bit faster.”

Added Mykijewycz, the other EPA official: “We're more in line with the same dance now, where we might have been out of step.”

From the Army's perspective, the EPA is moving faster, too, offering comments and feedback on Army plans at a quicker pace, said the Army's Daniel.

“The impacts of the order and

Cleanup comes at a cost

Cleaning up nearly 100 years of environmental messes does not come cheaply. Since cleanup efforts began at Fort George G. Meade in the 1980s, the Army has spent \$92 million.

This year, the Army is spending \$6.6 million, said James Daniel, a top official at the U.S. Army Environmental Command in San Antonio.

Looking forward, another \$9.1 million probably is needed to finish the job at the west county Army post, Daniel said.

Under the terms of Fort Meade's Federal Facility Agreement — which spells out the Army's cleanup obligations — the military must ask Congress to approve appropriate funding for the cleanup.

The Army is working on cleanup up 432 sites at 48 installations, including Fort Meade.

Each year, the Army spends \$400 million to \$450 million on environmental cleanup. The base realignment process also pumps some money into cleanup to facilitate the work of contracting and of expanding bases.

Daniel said that despite long-term operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and other important military commitments, the Army continues to focus on its environmental obligations here in the states.

“We've never seen our program impacted by what's happening overseas,” he said.

— Pamela Wood

this whole disagreement — it was more of a distraction than anything else,” he said. “Once that was all over, we got back to business.”

But all is not perfect.

Earlier this year, auditors with the Government Accountability Office scolded the Department of Defense for tracking cleanup efforts with different lingo and numbering systems than the ones the EPA uses. The DOD also has different ways to classify how far along a cleanup process is at each site.

“EPA and DOD report dissimilar pictures of cleanup progress because each agency reports cleanup progress in a different way,” the auditors wrote.

The report also criticized the delays in getting the Federal Facility Agreements signed at military installations, including Fort Meade.

Slow pace

Although the cleanup is moving forward, it can be a slow process.

The Fort Meade Superfund cleanup is conducted under a federal law called the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act — better known by its acronym, CERCLA.

The process laid out in CERCLA is detailed and deliberative. For those not familiar with government and military work, the process can

seem agonizingly slow.

It can take years from the time contamination is discovered until a final fix is decided on — say, digging out a landfill or pumping and treating contaminated groundwater.

Just 10 days ago, during a public meeting, Army contractors described how they were close to recommending that a groundwater plume of PCE that stretches from the southern end of the post onto the wildlife refuge should be left alone and monitored.

But the EPA sent the contractors back to do more testing before coming up with a solution. The EPA must sign off on all final cleanup strategies.

‘Close to the end’

The EPA officials expect that, at best, Fort Meade could hit the “construction complete” milestone in the CERCLA process by 2020. That means that environmental remedies are in place and working on all of the contaminated sites.

Daniel, the top Army cleanup official, said the military is aiming to get remedies even quicker than that, in 2013.

“We're pretty close to the end at Meade,” he said.

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