Picnic area planned on former Navy dump site

➤ *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2*

has interrupted some of the Yerba Buena remediation.

The largest area of the island still awaiting cleanup is known as Site 12. Its 90 acres stretch across the northern shore. The northeast corner was once home to the USS Pandemonium, a training facility for detecting and coping with radioactivity. Farther west, the Navy conducted radiation training and used the land to dump and sometimes burn its waste. Soil tests conducted there in 1999 reportedly turned up a shocking PCB contamination level of 19,000 parts per million — the EPA-mandated maximum is .22 ppm. More than 10,000 cubic yards of soil were removed and shipped off to Utah for burial in 2000, but soil tests conducted more than five years later found that PCB contamination was still more than seven times EPA's upper limit.

Remediation work is scheduled to continue there through 2018, when the land is supposed to become open space, with a group picnic area planned for an area currently fenced off by signs warning of radioactive contamination. Mere yards from these fences, the city continues to lease rental properties. It's fenced off, but when the spirit moves them, skateboarders, the homeless and late-night partiers all seem to make their way through the fences into the remaining structures.

Elsewhere on the island, evidence of toxicity and remediation efforts are plentiful. At 4th Street and Avenue M, for instance, across from a Little League diamond, sit mounds of soil covered in black plastic, awaiting removal. This is what's left of Building 233, which was demolished in January. It once housed the Navy's Radiation Safety School Training, and was the site of a spill of radium sulfate powder, or radium 226, which has a half-life of 16 centuries. Farther north up Avenue M, more mounds of plastic-covered soil and blue bins for transporting it sit behind fences festooned with yellow radiation-warning signs.

Treasure Island, as landfill, will turn to jelly in a major earthquake on either fault, liquefying just like it did South of the Slot in 1906. The 7.1 Loma Prieta quake of 1989, its epicenter 60 miles away, produced sand boils and ruptured dozens of gas, sewage and water lines on Treasure Island and compacted the landfill, bringing the entire island about 6 feet closer to sea level. Current tenants, who pay the city $10 million in rent every year, are warned in their leases of the "poor quality" of the soil underfoot.

To make the island seismically safe, the land will be compacted — by pounding the ground with heavy weights and adding new soil to the surface. Arc Ecology's Bloom maintains, however, that this procedure risks spreading the "dirty soil" laterally and that as part of the plan to erect several high-rise buildings on the island, those buildings will all require basements and sub-basements to provide stability, which will be susceptible to the intrusion of soil gases, Bloom said.

Bloom cites changing attitudes in City Hall about accountability to the public and the city's cozy relationship with the Lennar Corp., savior of San Francisco's southeast, as key problems. "How hard will the city and Lennar push the Navy?" he asked. "The ethic of 'you made a mess, clean it up' isn't there anymore," he said. "The city doesn't really want to know, the Navy doesn't really want to tell and the developer's only interested in what's going to be a problem. Everybody wants to get on with their agenda." ■

This is the first in a series of stories about District 6's Treasure Island.

The northwest *corner of Treasure Island, with its unbeatable views of the city skyline, was once a Navy dump site. Given both of those characteristics, it's sometimes referred to as "the hottest property in San Francisco."*

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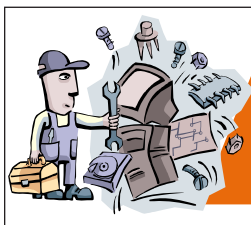

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Place: **150 Golden Gate Avenue 3rd Floor**

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