



Rhode Island Rose Island Torpedo Station

Facility and Location

Rose Island Naval Torpedo Station was situated on an approximately 14 acre island just west of the city of Newport in Narragansett Bay. Military use of the site began during the American Revolutionary War and the island belonged to the government beginning in 1799. The basic mission of Rose Island has changed over time but has revolved around using the island for harbor defense and as an explosive storage, testing, and manufacturing facility.

The original use of Rose Island was for harbor defense of Narragansett Bay in the American Revolutionary War. Additional defenses were added to the island with the beginning of construction of Fort Hamilton in 1800, but it was never completed. In 1869, a lighthouse was built on the southwestern bastion of the uncompleted Fort Hamilton. From 1883 to 1951, Rose Island was a part of the nearby Newport Naval Torpedo Station, which was the center of research, design, production, and testing of torpedoes for the Navy. During World War II, Rose Island regained a harbor defense mission for Narragansett Bay. In October 1942, three large naval gun batteries were established. Early in 1943, the Army took over this mission and replaced the navy guns with standard army coastal defense weapons.

The DoD transferred 1.5 acres for the lighthouse to the Coast Guard in 1958 and excessed the remaining 12.5 acres of the island to the General Services Administration in 1959. The entire island has ordnance and explosives potential based on several factors: explosive storage, explosive transfer facilities, an 1889 rifle range (not specifically located), 1894 to 1907 proof testing of the powder, a smokeless powder range in the bomb proof casements, World War II era anti-aircraft gun emplacements, and a probable demolition area on the northern tail of the island.

Media Sampled and Findings

Groundwater — In 2007, three samples reported no detection.

Appropriate Actions

Not Applicable. All samples were below the EPA and DoD Preliminary Remediation Goal of 15 ppb.