

FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES | Fort Myers Bombing and Gunnery Range

Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study



June 2019

DEFENSE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROGRAM FOR FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES

Across the country, the Department of Defense acquired properties, often during times of war, to use for military training, testing and demonstrations. When no longer needed, many of these properties were cleaned up according to the best practices available at the time and then transferred to other owners such as private individuals or other government entities. These Formerly Used Defense Sites can range from privately owned farms to National Parks. They also include residential, industrial and educational properties. The Department of Defense is committed to protecting people and the environment and improving public safety by cleaning up these sites if hazards from the former military operations remain. The Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites was established to evaluate and, if necessary, to remediate Formerly Used Defense Sites. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) manages the program on behalf of the Department of Defense.

Congress passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, also known as Superfund, in 1980 and the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act in 1986. These laws give the Corps the authority for certain cleanup activities and dictate the process we must follow. The Corps conducts investigations to determine the potential risk to people and the environment from the military's use of the property. Public involvement and community participation are important components of the process. We partner with stakeholders throughout the process, including congressional representatives, state and local governments, regulatory and environmental agencies, and affected property owners.

BACKGROUND

During World War II, the military leased 13,720 acres to establish the Fort Myers Bombing and Gunnery Range. Located in Charlotte County, about 16 miles southeast of Punta Gorda, aircrews from nearby Fort Myers Army Airfield used it for bombing and aerial gunnery practice. The aircrews trained on skip bombing, demolition bombing, dive bombing, strafing and air-to-ground gunnery ranges. Crews fired .50 caliber machine guns at the strafing and air-to-ground gunnery ranges. They used practice bombs at the skip and dive bombing ranges and practice and general purpose bombs at the demolition bombing range.

Following World War II, the Army no longer needed the site, and the leases were terminated. The former Fort Myers Bombing and Gunnery Range is within the Cecil M. Webb Wildlife Management Area.



ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

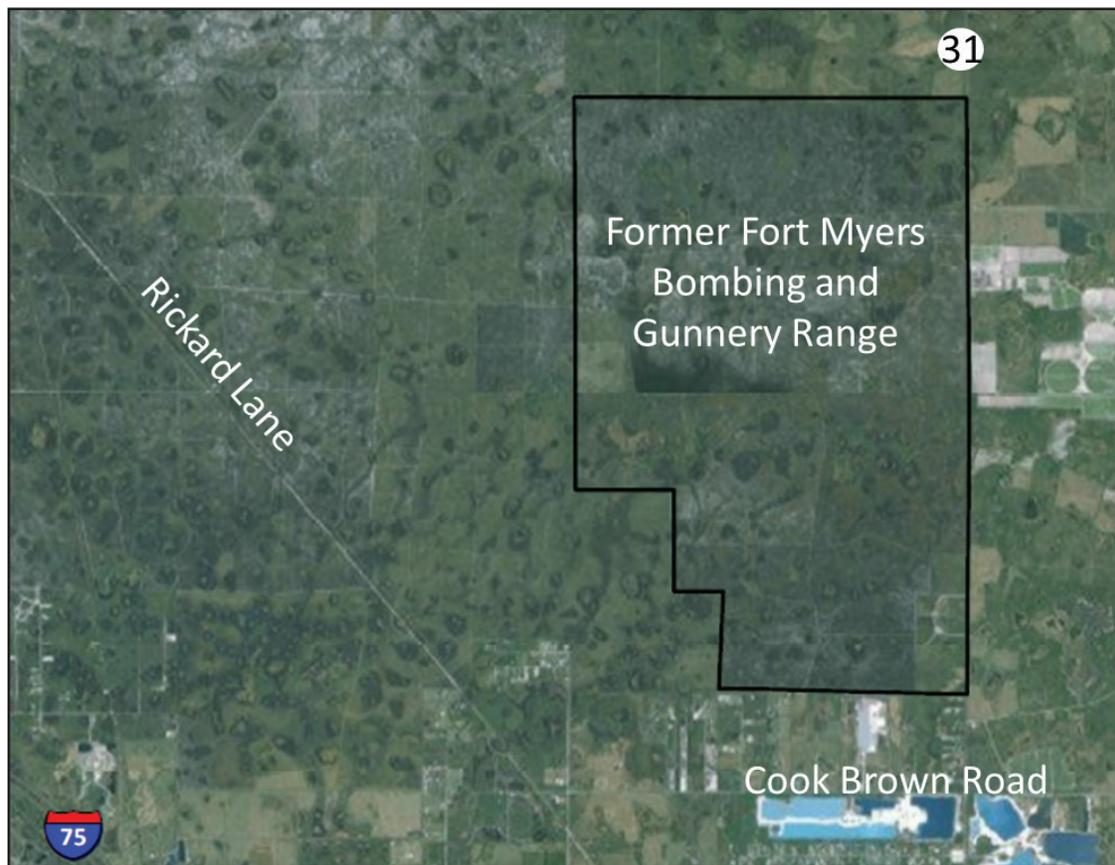
The Corps has evaluated the site several times over the years to determine if anything remains from the military's training. Through historical research and sites visits, the Corps identified the location of the training ranges. In 2009, the Corps completed a Site Inspection to determine if further evaluation of the site may be necessary based on the past military use of the property. No munitions or munitions debris (expended small arms and/or pieces of munitions) was found at the dive bombing and strafing ranges, but munitions debris was found in the bombing ranges.

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The Corps is now conducting a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study. The purpose of the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study is to characterize the nature and extent (what and where) of impacts to the environment caused by the military's use of the land. The Corps wants to determine what may be present, in what locations and concentrations.

The Remedial Investigation involves a number of steps designed to confirm the target locations and to determine if any munitions remain from the Army's training. The Corps' contractor will tow a cart with a digital metal detector on it along paths (or transects) to locate buried metallic objects. Then technicians will analyze the data to create maps showing the location and amount of buried metal. These are called density maps. The density maps will indicate where crews need to dig "grids" based on the low, medium and high density of metals. Grids are square or rectangular areas of various sizes (such as 25' x 25' or 50' x 50') where munitions experts will dig selected metallic objects within the grids to determine what the metallic debris is. If teams find munitions or munitions debris, they will collect soil samples in those locations.

Once the fieldwork is complete, the team will analyze the data, draft a report and make recommendations. The results will be summarized in a document called a Proposed Plan which will present the alternatives to address what, if anything, remains on the site associated with the former Army training. The alternatives can range from no further action being necessary, to educating the public about the site, to remedial action. When the Proposed Plan is ready, the Corps will present it at a public meeting, and the public will have at least 30 days to review and submit comments on the plan.



SAFETY FIRST: REMEMBER THE 3Rs

If you are on a Formerly Used Defense Site, do not pick up anything that you did not put on the ground. Because of previous military training, munitions may potentially be present. These could be dangerous and may not be easily recognizable. Never touch, move or disturb something you think may be a munition. Remember the 3Rs of explosive safety.

RECOGNIZE - The object you found could be dangerous.

RETREAT - Leave the area without touching or moving the object.

REPORT - Call 9-1-1 immediately.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Visit:

Project documents can be viewed at:
Punta Gorda Library
424 West Henry Street
Telephone: 941.833.5460

