



AUGUST 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. We are committed to protecting people and the environment and improving public safety by cleaning up these properties. 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. We conduct 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. The Corps partners with stakeholders throughout the process, including congressional representatives, state and local governments, regulatory and environmental agencies, and affected property owners.

BACKGROUND

Fort Clinch is located in Nassau County, Florida, 1.5 miles north of Fernandina Beach on the north end of Amelia Island. The Fort Clinch military reservation Formerly Used Defense Site included land within the old town of Fernandina, the principal Spanish settlement north of St. Augustine, Florida and comprises 920 acres of land.

In 1842, the lands encompassing Fort Clinch were designated as a military reservation by presidential order. Construction began between 1847 and 1850, being partially completed at the outbreak of the Civil War when the site was seized by Florida state authorities. By August 1861, a regiment of Confederate infantry occupied the fort and surrounding area. The Confederate forces equipped the fort with a battery of heavy guns, but evacuated the fort as Union forces approached in March of 1862. The fort remained under Union control and more work continued on the fort, but was still not completed by the end of the war, and was abandoned by 1869. The United States again regained control of the fort on March 3, 1869, at which time it was placed on caretaker status. Fort Clinch was again garrisoned for five months during the Spanish-American War.

In 1906, by act of Congress, the United States relinquished claims to Fort Clinch to the City of Fernandina Beach. In 1926, the fort and all lands, except the plaza in Fernandina, were sold to developers. The site became a state park in 1935, and the fort was restored by the State of Florida and the City of Fernandina Beach between 1937 and 1939. During World War II, the Army used a portion of the fort for radio and guard detail. The Navy also used a portion of the fort as a radar station. The fort was restored again in 1964 and remains as it is today a State Park.

ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

The Corps has evaluated the site several times over the years to determine if anything remains from the military's use. Through

FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES | Fort Clinch

historical research and sites visits, the Corps identified the areas that were used for burial of obsolete munitions and Civil War projectiles. In 2008, 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 site. Munitions debris does not pose an explosive hazard, and no munitions or explosive materials have been identified within the former Fort Clinch. However, because safety is our primary concern, the Corps will conduct a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study to determine what may be present in what amounts and locations. This is known as characterizing the nature and extent of potential military-related materials.

The Corps uses a tool called the Munitions Response Site Prioritization Protocol to evaluate the risk to people and the environment at Formerly Used Defense Sites, such as the former Fort Clinch. This tool helps the Department of Defense prioritize studies or remediation (if necessary) for properties across the country. Sites that have a higher potential risk to people and the environment are addressed first. The Corps has not scheduled the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study for Fort Clinch due to its lower prioritization score, but we will notify the public when we anticipate initiating further studies.



Source: Google Earth 2019

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.

 **Recognize**  **Retreat**  **Report**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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