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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

In April 1941, the Navy acquired use of approximately 560 acres in Nassau County for air crews from Naval Air Station Jacksonville to use for gunnery and bombing practice. The site, known as Alligator Bomb Target, was about eight miles southeast of Yulee in the tidal marshes of Alligator Creek. The Navy constructed a 20 foot by 20 foot pyramid-shaped target using palmetto logs and painted it yellow so pilots could easily see it from the air. Navy air crews fired .50 caliber machine guns and dropped 100 pound water-filled practice bombs on the target.

By September 1943, the Navy was no longer allowed to use the target because it interfered with an established commercial airway, and by 1944, the Navy no longer controlled the land. Both public and private entities own the land comprising the former Alligator Bomb Target which is part of the Nassau River-St. Johns River Marshes Aquatic Preserve.



ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

The Corps has evaluated the site several times over the years to determine if anything remains from the military's training. Based on historical research, the Corps established a 162 acre Alligator Bombing Range project area which includes the target location and a buffer around it. In 2010, the Corps completed a Site Inspection to determine if further evaluation of the site would be necessary based on the past military use of the area. No munitions or munitions debris (expended small arms and/or

FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES | Alligator Bomb Target

pieces of munitions) were found during the Site Inspection. However, because our primary concern is protecting people and the environment, the Corps will conduct a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study at a future date to determine if anything further remains in the area from the Navy's training, and if so, 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 Alligator Bombing Range. 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. Since the potential risk at the former Alligator Bombing Range is low, the Corps has not yet scheduled the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study, but we will notify the public when we anticipate initiating further studies.

While the possibility of encountering munitions is low, always use caution in areas where the military has trained. Remember and follow the 3Rs of Explosive Safety. **R**ecognize the object you found could be dangerous. **R**etreat from the area without touching the object, but make note of its location. **R**eport it by calling 9-1-1.



Approximate Location of Alligator Bombing Range

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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