



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. 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

Between 1940 and 1943, the U.S. military acquired 2,633.42 acres in St. Croix. The site became known as Benedict Field and served as an auxiliary airfield for Borinquen Field in Puerto Rico. Benedict Field was home to fighter and heavy bomber squadrons for aerial defense and submarine tracking in the Caribbean. The U.S. Army constructed housing and facilities for approximately 1,000 men, runways, roads, and utilities. The Army also constructed a practice bombing range southwest of the airstrip. One target was the Army Air Force Demonstration Bombing Target, and the other was a dive bombing target.

With the end of World War II, the Army no longer needed the site, and beginning in 1947, the federal government began deeding the property to other entities. The U.S. Virgin Island Port Authority now owns most of the land associated with the former Benedict Field which they use for the Henry Rohlsen International Airport.



### ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

The Corps has assessed the site a number of times over the years to evaluate if there is the potential of anything remaining from the Army's training. Based on historical research, the Corps established a 162-acre target area which includes the target location and a buffer around it. The dive bombing target is an undeveloped area within the airport property south of the runways. During

## FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES | Benedict Field

the Site Inspection, completed in 2011, teams found a nose cone from a practice bomb, so a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study was recommended. The purpose of a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study is to determine if anything remains in the area from the military's training, and if so, in what amounts and locations.

The fieldwork will include searching for munitions and collecting environmental samples to test for metals and explosives. The Corps' contractor will tow a digital metal detector 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 amount of metal in the ground. Grids are square or rectangular areas of various sizes (such as 25' x 25' or 50' x 50') where munitions experts dig up metallic objects to determine what they are and if they present a potential hazard.

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 for addressing what, if anything, remains on the site. The alternatives can range from no further action being necessary, to educating the public about the site, to conducting a removal action to search for and remove munitions. 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.



 Approximate Benedict Field Bombing Target Boundary

### SAFETY FIRST: Remember the 3Rs

Because of how the military used the site, there could potentially be buried munitions. 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.

**RECOGNIZE** - The item you found could be dangerous. **RETREAT** - Do not touch it in any way, and leave the area.

**REPORT** - Call 911 immediately.

 Recognize  Retreat  Report

### For More Information

#### Contact:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District

**Toll-Free 800.710.5184**

FUDS.Florida@usace.army.mil

[www.saj.usace.army.mil/BenedictField](http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/BenedictField)

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