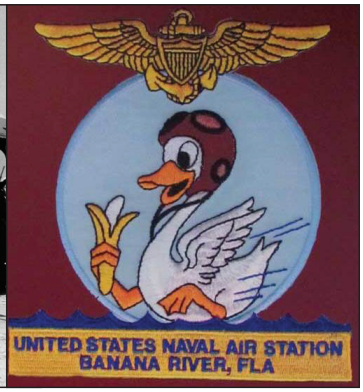
FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES | Naval Air Station Banana River Off-Base Disposal Area

REMEDIAL INVESTIGATION/FEASIBILITY STUDY



JULY 2020

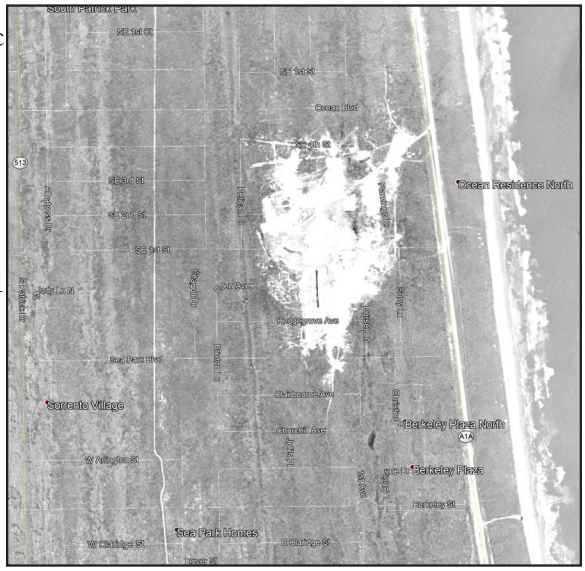
DEFENSE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROGRAM FOR FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES

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

The Navy acquired 1,823 acres of land between the Banana River and the Atlantic Ocean and began constructing a seaplane base in 1939. The Navy commissioned the base Naval Air Station Banana River on October 1, 1940. With the United States entrance into World War II, air crews began anti-submarine patrols of the Atlantic Ocean, and in March 1942, the Navy established a photographic laboratory and a navigation school. Naval Air Station Banana River was also home to a blimp squadron which conducted search and rescue along Florida's east coast. During this time, the Navy utilized land south of the base for disposal activities. After World War II ended, the base continued limited operations as a support facility but was deactivated August 1, 1947. The Navy transferred Banana River to the Air Force on September 1, 1948; it is now Patrick Air Force Base and is not eligible for the Formerly Used Defense Sites program. The Off-Base Disposal Area is eligible.



December 8, 1947 aerial image over current map

ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

In October 2018, the Corps began re-evaluating a portion of the property now known as the South Patrick Shores Subdivision to determine if the military acquired or used any part of the area. Research teams were able to locate various letters and memoranda not previously available indicating that during the construction of the base, the Navy began using an area south of the base for disposal activities. As the Navy prepared to deactivate the base, teams from the Navy's public works department sought to restore the disposal area to the property owner's satisfaction. They burned all of the trash and other debris and buried what remained. Those documents show that while the Navy did not own the property, the Navy did "otherwise possess" it which makes the Off-Base Disposal Area

eligible for the Formerly Used Defense Sites program. (Please see Site Summary and other fact sheets for more information.)

Based on the results of the Preliminary Assessment, concluding further investigation is warranted, we are seeking funding to conduct a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study. The purpose of the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study is to characterize the nature and extent (what, where, in what amounts) of environmental impacts attributable to the Navy. While we will not know the details of how the investigation will be completed until the contract is awarded and the Work Plan is finalized, we can provide general information for what to expect.

The Corps will need permission from individual property owners to investigate and will send a right-of-entry form to all the property owners within the 52-acre area. Once we have sufficient rights-of-entry to adequately characterize the site, we can plan how to do the fieldwork. We anticipate fieldwork will include some type of geophysical investigation to determine what may be in the ground as well as environmental sampling such as collecting soil and water samples. We may also collect air samples, depending upon the results of the geophysical investigation and soil sampling. Geophysical investigations use equipment over the grass/ground surface to digitally map what is in the ground. The investigation would be conducted in open areas (not under houses). Teams may also need to dig up items detected from geophysical investigations to identify what they are. Regardless of the work done in your yard, the crews will leave the property in the same condition they found it.

The historic photographic analysis indicates possibly up to 52 acres were impacted by the Navy's disposal activities. This does not necessarily mean that debris is buried throughout the 52 acres, nor does it mean that is the only area we will investigate. To ensure that nature and extent is properly characterized, the team will evaluate if we need to "step out" beyond those boundaries to determine if Navy related impacts extend beyond the area previously identified.

Once the fieldwork is finished, the team will analyze the data, complete risk assessments, and prepare a Remedial Investigation/ Feasibility Study report. We will summarize the report in a Proposed Plan which will present the Corps' Preferred Alternative to address the results of the investigation. The alternatives can range from No Action (if it is determined there is no risk to people or the environment) to various types of remedial actions. The community will have a minimum of 30 days to review and comment on the Proposed Plan and Preferred Alternative(s). Once the public comment period has concluded, the Corps will formally accept the alternative in a Decision Document. Once the Decision Document is signed, the Corps can implement the selected alternative.

Throughout the process, the Corps will continue to communicate with letters, postcards, emails, fact sheets, meetings, and website updates. We will be sure to notify the community at important milestones, such as when the Remedial Investigation/ Feasibility Study contract is awarded, and will provide periodic updates as well.

For More Information

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