

REMEDIAL INVESTIGATION/FEASIBILITY STUDY



MARCH 2016

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

The US government began acquiring property in 1939 to establish what became known as Ramey Air Force Base. Located north of Aguadilla, it grew to encompass approximately 4,357 acres. In addition to runways, hangars and related structures, it also included medical facilities, a golf course, water treatment plants and housing. Initially known as Borinquén Field, it was an important location during World War II, providing a base for reconnaissance flights to defend the US against German U-boats. It also served as a refueling station and maintenance area for aircraft flying to Europe and Africa. In 1948 it was renamed Ramey Air Force Base and was operated under the Strategic Air Command. Ramey played a critical role during the Cold War for reconnaissance missions and refueling squadrons. B-52 bombers arrived at Ramey in the 1950s, and bomber crews continued to be on alert at Ramey until 1972.



By 1973, the Air Force no longer needed the base, and it was deactivated. The property was transferred to other entities, and now the former base is home to Rafael Hernandez Airport and other governmental facilities and private enterprises.

ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

A number of investigations have been conducted over the years at two locations known as Landfill Area 1 (about 5.4 acres) and Suspected Waste Area 2 (approximately 11 acres). They are in an undeveloped area within the airport property, south of the runway. The purpose of the investigations was to determine if there are any environmental impacts attributable to the military.

The investigations included reviewing historical documents and photographs and geophysical surveys to identify buried debris and to assess the boundaries of the potential landfill and suspected waste areas. Teams also collected soil and water samples and dug holes (known as test pits) to see if debris associated with a landfill was present. These tools, along with other tests, helped the Corps determine how the military used these two areas and if there are military-related environmental impacts.

The geophysical survey established the boundaries of the Landfill 1 Area, and the 18 test pits further delineated the area as well as the type of buried debris. Teams recovered municipal trash such as tires, bottles, and plastic bags as well as construction debris (concrete, reinforcing bar and the like). Crews also utilized geophysical surveys to locate the Suspected Waste Area 2 and dug 30 test pits. However, no evidence of buried waste or debris was found.

Following the federally mandated process, the Corps is completing a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study in these two areas to characterize the nature and extent of potential environmental impacts caused by the military. In other words, the Corps wants to determine what may be present in what locations and concentrations. The team will evaluate the data from the previous investigations and draft a report with recommendations.

The results will be summarized in a document called a Proposed Plan which will present alternatives for addressing what, if anything attributable to the military, remains on the site. Alternatives can range from no further action being necessary, restricting access to the area 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.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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