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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ARMY BASE REALIGNMENT AND CLOSURE, FORT ORD OFFICE
P.O. BOX 5008, BUILDING #4463 GIGLING ROAD
MONTEREY, CA 93944-5008

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

Base Realignment and Closure Office

Diane Steeck
Field Biologist
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2493 Portola Road, Suite B
Ventura, California 93003

Dear Ms. Steeck:

Enclosed are biological monitoring reports documenting results of surveys and mitigation implementation for Army cleanup actions conducted at former Fort Ord in 2006. These reports are provided in accordance with the requirements of the Installation-Wide Multispecies Habitat Management Plan (HMP) and biological opinions (1999, 2002, and 2005).

The enclosed information includes: 1) an update of consultation history; 2) HMP implementation summary; 3) a summary of land transfers; 4) a summary of incidental take, and; 5) the Final 2006 FONR Impact Assessment and Habitat and Rare Plant Species Survey Results Fritzsche Army Airfield Fire Drill Area Former Fort Ord, California (HGL, February 2007).

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact me at (831) 242-7920 or email <William.collins@monterey.army.mil>.

Sincerely,

William K. Collins 8/24/07
William K. Collins
Wildlife Biologist
Base Realignment and Closure Office

Copies Furnished
Patty Valez, CDFG

ANNUAL REPORT TO U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
U.S. Army, Base Realignment and Closure Office, Former Fort Ord, California
August 2007

Background

On 19 October 1993, the Presidio of Monterey (POM) received a Biological Opinion (BO) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). The BO required the Army to develop and implement an Installation-Wide Multispecies Habitat Management Plan (HMP). The HMP was completed and signed by the Installation Commander and the Service in February 1994. The goal of the HMP is “to promote preservation, enhancement and restoration of habitat and populations of special-status species while allowing implementation of a community-based reuse plan that promotes economic recovery after the closure of Fort Ord.” This goal is being accomplished by transferring the larger contiguous and biologically diverse habitat parcels to natural resource management agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR). This allows other numerous small, fragmented parcels within and adjacent to disturbed areas to be developed for economic recovery.

In April 1996, representatives from the Army, Service, Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA), University of California and BLM agreed a modification to the HMP was necessary to reflect changes in species listings, changes to the FORA Reuse Plan and changes in Army pre-disposal activities. As a result, the 1994 HMP was revised with input from FORA, University of California, BLM, State Parks and others with resource conservation requirements. In April 1997, the Army and the Service signed the revised HMP. The HMP has been submitted to other signatory agencies. The HMP has been signed by the following agencies: BLM, California Department of Transportation, University of California @ Santa Cruz, City of Marina, Marina Coast Water District, Monterey Peninsula College, Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, FORA, Monterey County, York School, and CDPR.

The Army has re-initiated formal consultation four times since the HMP was published in April 1997. These consultations resulted in the Service issuing the following opinions: *Biological and Conference Opinion on the Closure and Reuse of Fort Ord, Monterey County, California (1-8-99-F/C-39R, March 30, 1999)*, *Biological Opinion on the Closure and Reuse of Fort Ord, Monterey County, California, as it affects Monterey Spineflower Critical Habitat (1-8-01-F-70R, October 22, 2002)*, *Biological Opinion for the Fort Ord Outfall Removal and Stormwater Diversion Project (1-8-03-F-25, August 8, 2003)*, and the *Biological Opinion on the Cleanup and Reuse of Former Fort Ord, Monterey County, California, as it affects California Tiger Salamander and Critical Habitat for Contra Costa Goldfields (1-8-04-F-25R, March 14, 2005)*.

Coordination with the Service Since 2005

As required by the HMP and Biological Opinions, the Army has submitted annual reports documenting habitat monitoring results, property transfer status, and coordination updates to the Service and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) since 1994. The enclosed reports describe actions taken in 2006 and 2007 that implement requirements identified in the HMP, Biological Opinions, or subsequent correspondence. The following is a summary of Army actions that occurred in 2006.

Implementation of the HMP

1. Landfill (OU-2)

The landfill is being considered to receive additional contaminated soil from Site 39 excavations to consolidate contaminated soil on former Fort Ord. Transportation of contaminated soil would occur on the existing network of haul roads. A Feasibility Study Addendum is being prepared to address remedial alternatives for Site 39 while taking into consideration the ecological risks. Work is expected to begin in 2008 following completion of the FS Addendum, Proposed Plan and Record of Decision Amendment.

The City of Marina is expected to request a Right-of-Entry to use the landfill to restore habitat on Cells B + C as a condition of a sand gilia take permit issued to the City of Marina by CDFG.

The Army continues to fund BLM to provide invasive weed control on Army owned lands which include the landfill parcel.

2. Site 3 (Beach Ranges)

The Army, U.S. EPA, and California DTSC signed a Record of Decision documenting that the site is protective of ecological receptors including rare, threatened, and endangered species. The Army is in the process of collecting additional soil samples to confirm that the site remains protective of ecological receptors including listed species.

In the 2002 – 2003 planting seasons, a total of 8,964 native plants from seven species were planted in remediated and recontoured areas on the former beach ranges. Success rates for perennial plant species were excellent, with an overall average of approximately 75%. Survival rates for the two threatened and endangered annual plant species were excellent; Monterey spineflower was 98% and sand gilia was 65%.

CDPR continues to conduct invasive weed control by applications of glyphosate (Round-up Pro).

The former Soldiers Club (Stilwell Hall) was completely removed from the site including the removal of rip-rap and the majority of an asphalt parking lot.

The Fort Ord Reuse Authority Stormwater Diversion and Outfall Removal Project for three of the stormwater outfalls has been completed. Restoration of the site is being coordinated with CDPH as required by the 2003 biological opinion.

In the spring of 2007 the Army transferred the Site 3 property to the Department of Interior who is expected to transfer the property to CDPH. However, the Army is in the process of preparing a Work Plan to address the requirement of ecological monitoring. The Work Plan is being coordinated with CDPH and the Base Cleanup Team.

3. Contaminated Soil (Site 39)

No maritime chaparral in designated Natural Resource Management Areas (NRMA) was disturbed in 2006 as a result of contaminated soil remediation. The Army submitted a draft and draft final ecological risk assessment for Site 39 and is in the process of incorporating comments received from U.S. EPA and California DTSC. The Draft Final Site 39 Ecological Risk Assessment and Feasibility Study will be provided to the Service in 2008 to serve as a biological assessment for Section 7 consultation on the protectiveness of the remedy to listed species and critical habitat following the excavation of contaminated soils.

Excavation of contaminated soils within the Impact Area is expected to begin in 2008. Once contaminated soils are removed, the disturbed areas will be monitored for erosion and invasive weed incursions. Restoration of some areas will likely be necessary. A restoration plan is being drafted for the Service's review and will be approved prior to implementation. It is anticipated that chaparral restoration will occur beginning in the 2009 – 2010 growing season following the cleanup confirmation reports.

4. Munitions and Explosives of Concern (MEC)

The Army re-established a system of fuel-breaks within the Impact Area by widening existing 15-20 foot wide access roads to a 45 – 50 foot clearance of vegetation. The fuel-break system will be manually and/or mechanically cleared as necessary to serve as both a fuel-break and access route into the Impact Area. Once MEC is removed from within the fuel-breaks, woody debris may be grubbed to prevent injury to firefighters or their equipment. If grubbing is necessary, it will occur only within the roadbeds of designated defensible polygon fuel-breaks.

Threatened and endangered species education classes for ordnance and explosive workers were conducted several times last year. In addition, tailgate briefings and site visits were conducted routinely to ensure habitat protection measures were being implemented in accordance with the HMP.

Concertina-wire was installed adjacent to the existing barbed-wire fence surrounding the north and west sides of the Impact Area. The fence is monitored weekly for damage or vandalism to prevent unauthorized access into Munitions Response Sites and habitat areas.

Coordinated and funded BLM invasive weed and erosion control on Army lands where MEC work was conducted or planned. As a result of this work approximately 4,000 gallons of Roundup Pro® were applied and over 2,100 person-hours were spent on the control of invasive weeds from both habitat and development parcels still under Army control.

5. Groundwater Remediation Project on University of California @ Santa Cruz Property

Groundwater remediation activities were conducted while minimizing impacts to listed species and their habitats within the University of California Nature Reserve during investigations and monitoring of contaminated groundwater plumes. Groundwater monitoring, injection, and extraction wells were drilled and quarterly groundwater monitoring continues to be implemented within the UCSC Northern Reserve Area with minimal impacts to HMP species. Access roads and well areas that were impacted were monitored to determine impacts to sand gilia and Monterey spineflower populations within the UC Reserve. Populations of both species within access roads and well locations continue to occur where previously mapped. In addition, an adult CTS was discovered unharmed during recent groundwater remediation activities and was relocated safely out of harms way and outside of the project boundaries. See the attached map identifying CTS discoveries at former Fort Ord in 2006 – 2007.

Summary of Land Transfers

A total of 15,032.5 acres of former Fort Ord have been transferred to date. A total of 1,935 acres was transferred in 2006 (see attached map). Over 8,140 acres have been transferred to agencies responsible for managing the land as habitat reserves. Another 1,314 acres have been transferred as Development with Reserve Restrictions. A total of 5,576 acres have been transferred as Development parcels.

Incidental Take and Sightings

No take of Smith's blue butterflies, western snowy plovers or California tiger salamanders occurred in 2006 as a result of the Army's ongoing pre-disposal actions. Three California tiger salamanders were encountered on Army property in 2006 - 2007. The adult salamanders were discovered on December 2006 (8 inches total length), January 2007 (5 inches total length), and July 2007 (6 inches total length). The salamander discovered in December was found in a concrete maintenance bay approximately 1.9 kilometers from the nearest known CTS breeding pond (Henneken's Ranch Wetland). All the salamanders were relocated to the nearest known vernal pools or upland habitat.