

Fort Ord Environmental Cleanup Annual Report

Fort Ord BRAC Office

October 2020

The Fort Ord Cleanup Program

Fort Ord closed on September 30, 1994. It was one of the largest U.S. military bases ever closed. The closure left behind an area of land the size of San Francisco. It was also an opportunity to repurpose the land for civilian uses that the community envisioned.

The Army is responsible for environmental cleanup of the former Fort Ord. The goals of the environmental cleanup program are to:

1. Protect human health and the environment;
2. Promote preservation, enhancement and restoration of habitat;
3. Transfer property for land uses determined by the community reuse plan.

Former Fort Ord is home to a university, a research center, portions of a local college, a National Monument, outlet stores, a veterans' cemetery, and a new joint Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense health care center.

The Army's cleanup program is implemented under the oversight of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and California Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Each year the Army publishes this annual report summarizing the key cleanup elements and accomplishments.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

We are all experiencing some interesting times. We had to cancel our annual guided nature walk, the July Open House/Bus Tour, and all our Earth Day events. These events are consistent community and staff favorites. We miss you and also miss our opportunity to take you into restricted areas of Fort Ord to show the cleanup progress as we drive by some of the most stunning Fort Ord habitat. We promise an amazing open house / bus tour and guided nature walk when circumstances allow. While not a substitute for the open house / bus tour and guided nature walk, our web site, FortOrdCleanup.com, has a great deal of information.

We also want to let you know that there are no prescribed burns planned for 2020. We know this is important to our Salinas Valley / Monterey Bay neighbors.

We recognize that recreation and access is also very important. To enjoy the Fort Ord National Monument, please stay on designated roads and trails and mind the signs and fencing. These are in place to keep people safe from explosive hazards. Metal detection is prohibited on the former Fort Ord due to the possibility of remaining explosive hazards.

Our usual behind-the-scenes work continues uninterrupted: groundwater cleanup, sampling, monitoring, habitat management, as we navigate in this new and evolving environment. Finally, thank you for your continued interest in the U.S. Army Fort Ord cleanup program and stay safe.



In August, over seven thousand native plants scheduled for replanting in the Impact Area were rescued from a Carmel Valley nursery during the recent wildfires. See story on page 6.

PARA OBTENER UNA COPIA EN ESPAÑOL, CONTACTE: 831-393-1284
FOR A COPY OF THIS NEWSLETTER IN SPANISH, CALL 831-393-1284

Munitions Cleanup

From 1917 until base closure in 1994, military units trained on the lands of the former Fort Ord. Types of military munitions used at Fort Ord included artillery projectiles, rockets, hand grenades, practice land mines, pyrotechnics, bombs, and demolition materials. After base closure, the Army identified areas where munitions could still remain, and began conducting investigations and removal of munitions from these areas. The results of these investigations and removal actions were then evaluated, and today, much of the former Fort Ord has been released for reuse as selected by the local community. Munitions cleanup paused after March 2020 for the two key cleanup areas: the Impact Area Munitions Response Area and the northern portion of the Fort Ord National Monument. It will resume in two to three years.

Since 2008, the Army has been continually conducting the cleanup of the 6,500 acre Impact Area Munitions Response Area. Over the last year, cleanup was completed in Units 25 and 28. In some units where munitions cleanup has been conducted, prescribed burns are still required to enhance the habitat. The remaining munitions cleanup and completion of the prescribed burns in the Impact Area Munitions Response Area is expected to take another 8 to 10 years.

Munitions cleanup was also conducted in the northern portion of the Fort Ord National Monument. The cleanup work supports the safe use of the Fort Ord National Monument for visitors, workers, and wildlife for years to come. This area includes land managed by the Bureau of



One of the Army's kiosks with trail access information for the northern portion of the Fort Ord National Monument.

Land Management for public recreation. The Army worked with the Bureau of Land Management to ensure the cleanup also supports several new trails. While most of the cleanup work has been completed and trails have re-opened, one location, called Unit A, has not yet benefited from a prescribed burn with follow-on munitions cleanup. Unit A is closed, except for trails that have been cleaned up and are signed open. Updated trail information is available at several information kiosks at frequently-used recreational access points, and on the Army's web site fortordcleanup.com. Visitors who comply with posted restrictions and remain on designated

trails are safe from munitions hazards. We ask that you Mind the Signs. For the latest information on cleanup and trail accessibility, go to the cleanup programs tab, then select the "BLM Area B" section of FortOrdCleanup.com.



NO BURNS IN 2020. Due to fiscal constraints, the Army will not conduct prescribed burns in 2020. Prescribed burns will be scheduled in future burn seasons.

**REMEMBER
the 3 Rs**

1

RECOGNIZE

2

RETREAT

3

REPORT

of UXO Safety!

At the former Fort Ord, because of its history as a military base, it is possible that a military munition can be encountered. Should you suspect that you have encountered a munition, never approach, touch, move or disturb it. Even old munitions can detonate, causing severe injuries or death. If visiting the former Fort Ord, learn and follow the 3Rs of Explosives Safety.

- Recognize. Do not approach, touch or disturb it and mark the location near it.
- Retreat. Leave the area carefully, the way you entered.
- Report. Call 911.

The Army regularly provides munitions safety presentations to local schools; provides munitions recognition and safety training to workers conducting ground intrusive activities on the former Fort Ord; and maintains a site security program, working with neighboring municipalities and law enforcement agencies. Interested in the free safety training class? You can take it on-line at FortOrdSafety.com.



MIND THE SIGNS

While munitions cleanup is temporarily paused, access to the Impact Area is controlled by the Army. In addition to signs and fencing, the area is regularly patrolled for trespassers. The Army regularly meets with local law enforcement agencies to discuss security. There have been trespassing incidents that involved law enforcement support. Recent security enhancements include installation of a double high layer of concertina wire in locations of the fence where more evidence of trespass activity has been observed this year. Patrol frequency

and location are adjusted depending on the circumstances.

The Monument has experienced increased visitor traffic, likely coinciding with Covid-19 social distancing precautions. Unfortunately, more evidence of trespass has been detected coinciding with greater use. As a result, the Bureau of Land Management Law Enforcement has increased patrols and added one, new full time Law Enforcement Ranger. The Presidio of Monterey has also increased patrols (day and night). If you observe suspicious activities, please contact local law enforcement.



Metal detecting is prohibited on Fort Ord due to potential explosive hazards.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT ALSO CALLED THE ESCA. NOW THAT THE FORT ORD REUSE AUTHORITY NO LONGER EXISTS, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

BACKGROUND: In March 2007 the U.S. Army and the Fort Ord Reuse Authority entered into an agreement (Environmental Services Cooperative Agreement or ESCA for short) resulting in the transfer of approximately 3,000 acres of Economic Development Conveyance properties and the responsibility of removing munitions and explosives of concern on those properties to the Fort Ord Reuse Authority. The ultimate goal of the program was to expedite the environmental cleanup activities, and property transfer, with the approval of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and in consultation with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, to the local jurisdictions after the completion of appropriate munitions cleanup activities. Under the terms of the agreement the Army provided the Fort Ord Reuse Authority with the funds to conduct the munitions remediation work, purchase environmental insurance to cover remedial activities, and reimburse regulators for their oversight of the program.

CURRENT STATUS: The remedial actions are complete on all of these properties. The evaluations resulted in the final remedies that consist of Land Use Controls. After completing the remedial actions,

the Reuse Authority transferred these properties to the intended property recipients. The City of Seaside was designated the Environmental Services Cooperative Agreement successor and as of June 2020 entered into a period of long-term Land Use Control management funded by the U.S. Army until June 30, 2028.

WHAT ARE LAND USE CONTROLS? Land use controls required in these properties include munitions safety measures that apply to ground-disturbance activities that occur on these sites. Those activities must be planned and coordinated in advance so that appropriate munitions safety support is provided in every case. Munitions recognition and safety training is required for ground-disturbing or intrusive activities. You can take this class for free at FortOrdSafety.com. The City of Seaside (as the successor) coordinates and manages the Land Use Control implementation actions with local jurisdictions and property owners. Additional land use restrictions apply to specific properties. Those restrictions are outlined in the deeds, as well as described in the Land Use Control Implementation Plan/Operation and Maintenance Plan developed by the Fort Ord Reuse Authority.



Groundwater monitoring left to right: Equipment setup for multiport well monitoring; measuring water level in a monitoring well; and preparing samples for sending to the laboratory. Photos courtesy of D. Lieberman, AHTNA

Groundwater Cleanup

When rain falls on the land, much of the water (especially when there is sandy soil like that found in the Monterey Bay area) seeps into the ground. The water continues down through the soil until it hits an underground layer of clay or rock and can go no further. Scientists call such an underground layer an aquitard. When the water can go no further it accumulates in the soil on top of the aquitard. Scientists refer to water stored in the ground in this way as groundwater and the soil where the groundwater is found as an aquifer. Water in an aquifer can flow through the soil, just like water flows in a river, only much slower.

In the northern portion of the former

Fort Ord, there are four underlying aquifers that are of primary importance to the groundwater cleanup program, each separated by an aquitard. The upper-most, or shallowest, aquifer is called the A-Aquifer. The other deeper aquifers include the 180-Foot Aquifer which is split into the Upper and Lower 180-Foot Aquifers, and the 400-Foot Aquifer. These aquifers are named based on their depth below ground surface in the Salinas Valley in the east.

The A-Aquifer is the shallowest aquifer, between 60 feet and 100 feet deep, and is not used as a public water supply. The soil within the A-Aquifer is generally made up of sand or sandy soil from ancient sand dunes.

The Upper 180-Foot Aquifer has previously been used as a public water supply source, but does not currently supply drinking water to either the former Fort Ord or the City of Marina. The soil within this aquifer is made up of mainly sand with some gravel.

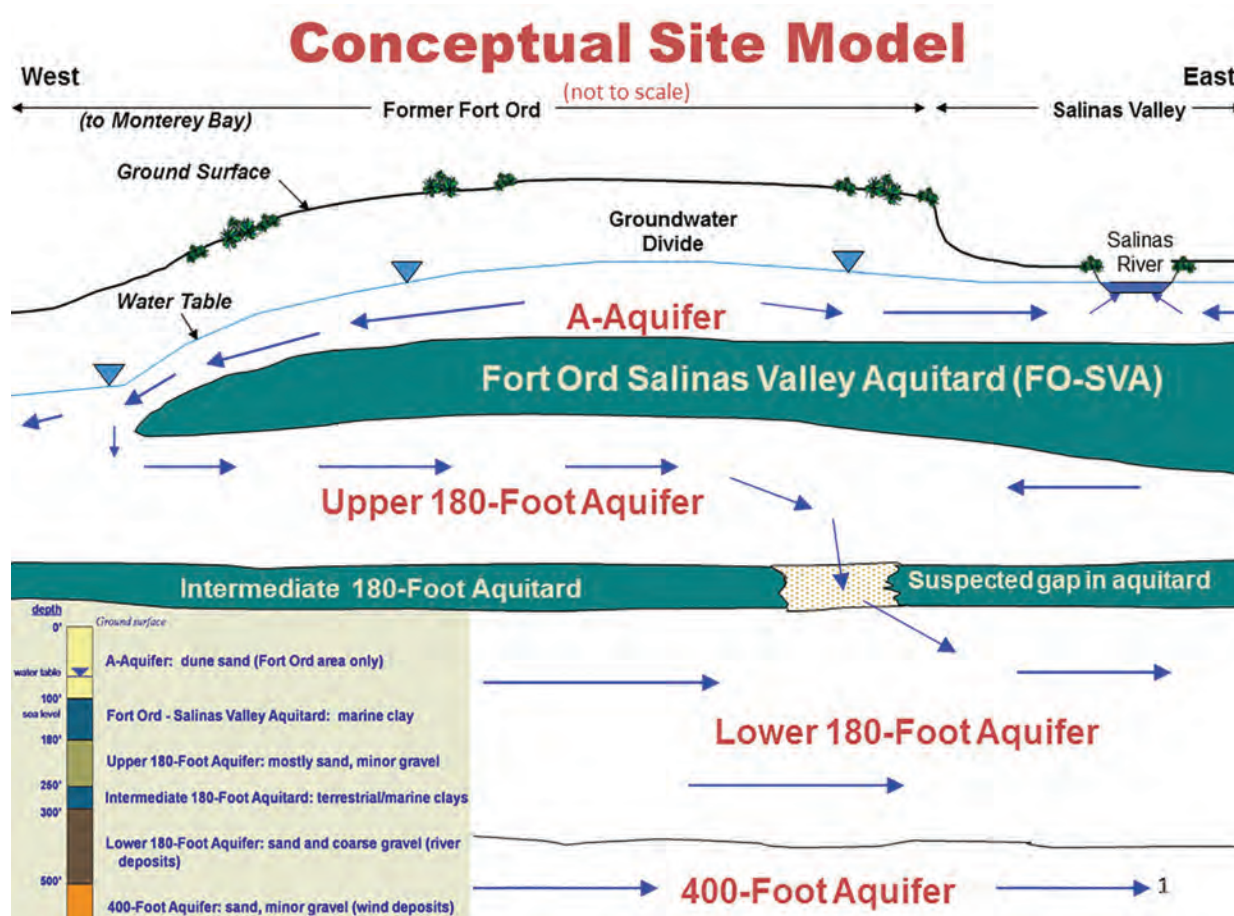
The Lower 180-Foot Aquifer and the 400-Foot Aquifer are also made up of gravel and sand with some clay. Both are a major source of water for both the former Fort Ord and farms in the Salinas Valley.

The Conceptual Site Model below and to the left shows a cross section of aquifers on Fort Ord.

When Fort Ord was active it was like a medium sized city. Facilities included auto shops, fire stations, and a landfill. As a result, four groundwater contamination areas were identified. Cleanup of one of the groundwater contamination areas, Operable Unit 1, was completed in 2019.

The Army continues to clean up three areas of groundwater contamination under the former Fort Ord: Operable Unit 2, Sites 2/12, and Operable Unit Carbon Tetrachloride Plume. These groundwater plumes have reduced in size significantly since clean-up began.

Operable Unit 2 —A landfill southwest of the intersection of Imjin Parkway and Abrams Road was a source of groundwater contamination. The Army stopped accepting waste into the landfill in 1987. An impermeable cover placed over the landfill prevents rainwater from draining through the buried materials and carrying contamination to the groundwater. A gas extraction and treatment system removes methane gas and

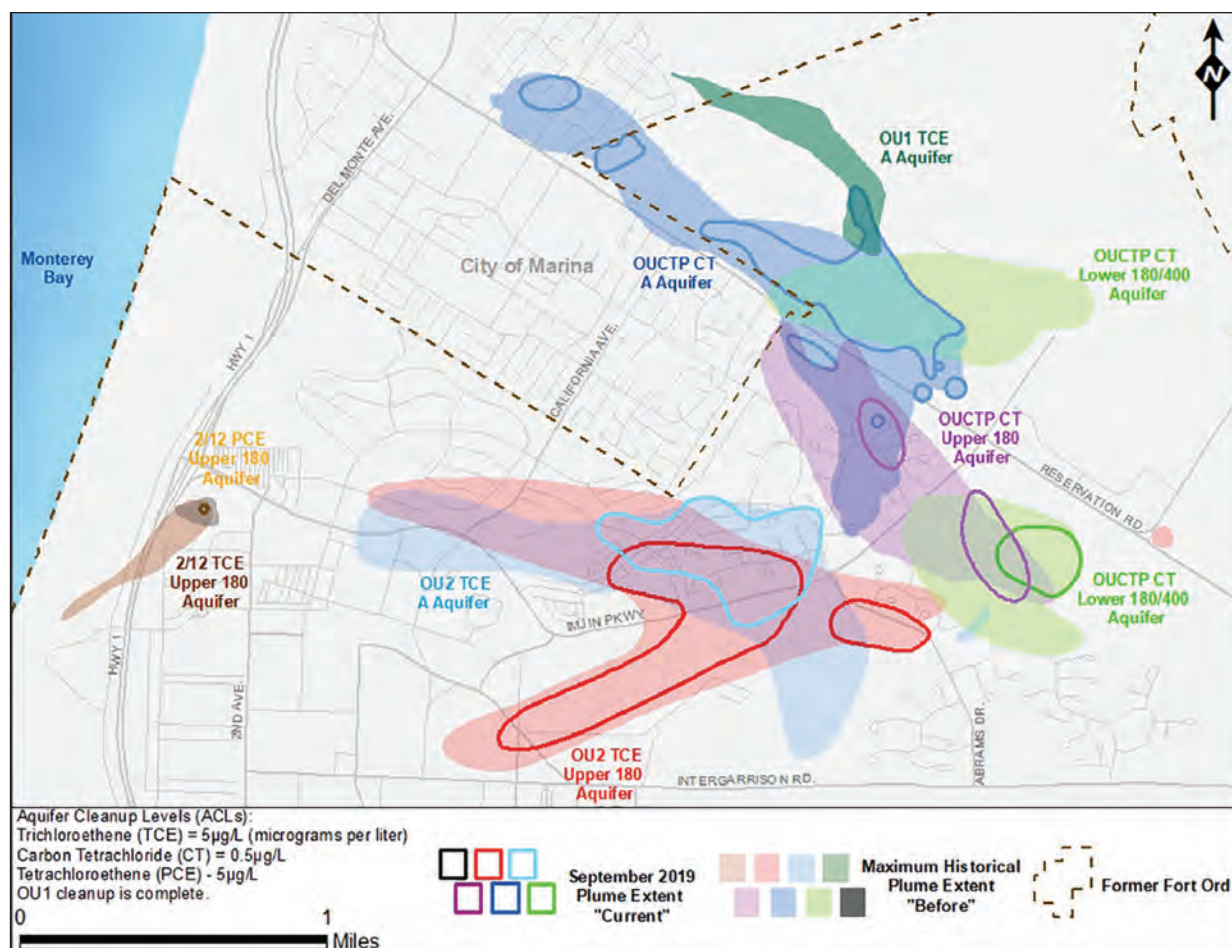


chemicals of concern from within the landfill. Groundwater extraction and treatment with granular activated carbon for chemicals of concern in the A-Aquifer and the Upper 180-Foot Aquifer began in 1995. The plume has reduced in size significantly since then, and a new groundwater treatment plant, operational since 2019, is increasing cleanup efficiency. New extraction wells were also installed in 2020 and are in operation.

Sites 2/12—A former Army maintenance facility in the current location of “The Dunes on Monterey Bay” shopping center (south of Imjin Parkway and east of Highway 1) improperly disposed solvents which caused groundwater contamination. Contaminated soil was removed in the 1990s. Groundwater extraction and treatment with granular activated carbon began in 1999 and is on-going. Treatment by soil vapor extraction enhanced the groundwater remedy and shortened cleanup time. The amount of groundwater contamination remaining at this site is just a small fraction of what it was before clean-up began.

Operable Unit Carbon Tetrachloride Plume — Groundwater located north of Imjin Parkway and Abrams Road and along Reservation Road was contaminated by improperly disposed solvents. Carbon Tetrachloride is the primary chemical of concern and cleanup methods include enhanced in situ bio-remediation (A-Aquifer), groundwater extraction and treatment with granular activated carbon (Upper 180-Foot Aquifer), and monitored natural attenuation (with wellhead treatment as a contingency measure) (Lower 180-Foot Aquifer). Remediation began in 2009 for the A-Aquifer and in 2011 for the Upper and Lower 180-Foot Aquifers.

Groundwater from Operable Unit 2, Sites 2/12, and a portion of Operable Unit Carbon Tetrachloride (Upper 180-Foot Aquifer) are treated by pumping water from the ground with extraction wells, running the water through vessels containing granular activated carbon which removes contamination, then returning the water to the ground using injection wells. The Army plans to add



Current extent of the groundwater contamination plumes on the former Fort Ord

another well in 2021 to enhance the cleanup operations. Groundwater cleanup will continue until concentration(s) of chemicals of concern are below Aquifer Cleanup Levels designated by the Records of Decision. Below is a table showing the amount of contaminants removed as of December 2019.

PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES (PFAS)

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals that includes perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA)/perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and many other chemicals. PFAS have been manufactured and used in a variety of industries around the globe, including in the United States since the 1940s. PFOA and PFOS have been the most extensively produced and studied of these chemicals. Both chemicals are very persistent in the environment and in the human body — meaning they don't break down and they can accumulate over time. There is evidence that exposure to PFAS can lead to adverse human health effects.

In 2020, the Army conducted a site-wide review of historical Fort Ord activities with the

potential to cause PFOA/PFOS contamination in soil and groundwater at the former Fort Ord, and the results were summarized in a technical summary report available at FortOrdcleanup.com. Extensive site-wide research and investigations, including interviews with site personnel, were conducted during the development of this report which underwent review by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. The report indicates there was limited historical use of PFAS-containing materials from activities such as fire fighter training.

For the next step, the Army will conduct a Preliminary Assessment for PFAS at the former Fort Ord. The Army will gather historical and other available information about site conditions where it is suspected or known that PFAS containing materials were used, stored, or disposed of. If the results indicate further investigation is needed, the Army may conduct a site investigation, which may include additional soil and groundwater sampling to determine whether or not a release of PFAS has occurred.

Cleanup Results as of December 31, 2019		
	Operable Unit 2 / Operable Unit Carbon Tetrachloride Plume*	Sites 2/12
Treatment Started	October 1995	April 1999
Gallons Treated	7.32 billion	2.117 billion
Pounds of contaminants removed	876	489
Gallons of contaminants removed	70	39
Aquifers Treated	A-Aquifer Upper 180-Foot aquifer	Upper 180-Foot aquifer

*The Operable Unit Carbon Tetrachloride Plume remedy for the Upper 180-Foot Aquifer is connected to the Operable Unit 2 groundwater treatment plant.

Fort Ord drinking water is safe and protected from contamination plumes.

The Marina Coast Water District supplies drinking water to the City of Marina and former Fort Ord. Fort Ord drinking water meets all Federal and State regulatory standards. Drinking water quality is regularly tested and results are reported in an annual Consumer Confidence Report found at: https://www.mcwd.org/gsa_ccr.html

Landfill

The Army operated a landfill during the years Fort Ord served as a training base. The landfill provided waste disposal for Fort Ord's housing, offices and support facilities, such as machine shops and motor pools. The Army stopped accepting waste from the base operations and housing into the landfill in 1987. Like many municipal landfills from this era, Fort Ord's landfill was later found to be leaching hazardous chemicals into the groundwater beneath it. A treatment facility (see previous article) cleans the groundwater. The non-operational landfill cells are now covered with a special impermeable cover so that rain water cannot contact the waste and cause chemicals to leach through the soil into groundwater beneath the landfill.

As with most landfills, decay of organic waste produces gases (primarily methane and carbon dioxide). Over time, as wastes continue to decay, less methane will be produced and eventually will decline to near zero. While methane gas has practically no toxic effects, at levels of 5% to 15% in air, methane can be ignited and could endanger landfill workers and nearby residents. A gas extraction and treatment system restricts landfill gas from reaching high concentrations and migrating off the landfill. The system consists of a thermal treatment unit which extracts landfill gas from around the perimeter of landfill cells and destroys methane and potentially hazardous trace gases collected from under the landfill cover.

There is a maintenance program to make sure treatment systems are operating efficiently and the landfill cover system remains intact. The cover is inspected routinely by Fort Ord cleanup workers and Monterey County officials and repairs are made to any minor damage caused by erosion and animals. Reducing rodent populations helps maintain the integrity of the landfill cover. To help with this task, owl boxes and raptor perches were installed at the landfill in 2017 to attract raptors and encourage the natural removal of gophers, ground squirrels and other rodents. Additional boxes and perches were installed in 2018 and 2020 to enhance this successful, natural system. Additional work this year also included erosion repairs.

Soil Cleanup

The Army is required to clean up soil contamination that could harm the health of human beings, as well as plants and animals. Explosive compounds, metals, and hydrocarbons may be present in areas where munitions and munitions-

related training occurred. All cleanup sites identified in the Site 39 Record of Decision Amendment have been completed. Three additional areas have been identified. Site 39 encompasses the historical Impact Area. There may be additional soil cleanup

locations identified as the munitions cleanup moves forward in the Impact Area Munitions Response Area - soil remediation will resume after munitions cleanup is completed and remaining soil cleanup locations are identified.

Habitat Management

The 27,827 acres of the former Fort Ord encompass a biologically diverse and unique region, which ranges from the sand dunes along the shores of Monterey Bay to the riparian forest of Toro Creek. The range and combination of climatic, topographic, and soil conditions at Fort Ord support several plant communities, with central maritime chaparral being the most extensive. Plants within this community are

well adapted to periodic fires occurring every several decades and poor soil conditions present on Fort Ord. Some of the rare plants occur only in the Monterey Bay area.

The diverse habitats on Fort Ord lands provide a setting for several species protected by the federal and state governments. Two annual plants, federally endangered and state threatened sand gilia and federally threatened Monterey spineflower, thrive in

areas with exposed sandy soils. The vernal pools on the former Fort Ord provide habitat for a federally endangered wildflower, Contra Costa goldfields, and the federally and state threatened California tiger salamander. Areas along the coast support the federally threatened western snowy plover (also listed as species of special concern in California) and the federally endangered Smith's blue butterfly – the first insect listed under the

CARMEL FIRE PLANT RESCUE

In August, an unusual dry lightning event caused over 350 fires across northern California. In Monterey County, the Carmel, River and Dolan fires, required thousands of people to evacuate. The Carmel fire threatened a native plant nursery in Carmel Valley operated by Burleson Consulting Inc., a contractor of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Over seven thousand native plants are being grown and taken care of at the nursery for the Fort Ord Site 39 Habitat Restoration program. Thanks to the valiant, late night efforts by Burleson staff and volunteers, these plants were moved from the nursery to Fort Ord for safekeeping when the evacuation warning was issued. The plants shown in the accompanying photo were grown from seeds or cuttings carefully harvested from sites across the Fort Ord National Monument. They will be planted in winter at several restoration sites within the Impact Area to fulfill the Army's obligations under the Programmatic Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and according to the Habitat Restoration Plan.



Plants located at their temporary Fort Ord home.

Endangered Species Act. Yadon's rein orchid, a federally endangered plant, and Seaside bird's-beak, a state endangered plant, also occur on the former Fort Ord.

Under the Endangered Species Act the Army is required to protect these species.

The Army works closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that it conducts cleanup activities in a manner that minimizes impacts to the species and their habitat. In 1993, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Biological Opinion directing the Army to develop and implement an Installation-Wide Multispecies Habitat Management Plan for former Fort Ord. The Habitat Management Plan was updated in 1997.

The general goal of the Habitat Management Plan is to "promote preservation, enhancement, and restoration of habitat and populations of Habitat Management Plan species while allowing development on selected properties that promotes economic recovery after closure of Fort Ord." The Habitat Management Plan identified areas that could be developed with or without restrictions and areas set aside as habitat reserves or corridors

with specific management guidelines to ensure the continued conservation of the rare, threatened, and endangered species and their habitats. Since the issuance of the Habitat Management Plan, the Army conducted formal consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which issued several Biological Opinions. Most recently, the Service issued a Programmatic Biological Opinion, which supersedes all previous Biological Opinions. The Habitat Management Plan and the Programmatic Biological Opinion outline management guidelines and specific conservation measures the Army must implement to minimize impacts on natural resources that may be affected during the environmental cleanup of the installation.

The Army monitors rare plant and animal species both before and after remediation activities, and uses the monitoring data to assess whether the success criteria specified in the Habitat Management Plan, the Programmatic Biological Opinion, and monitoring protocols have been met. The Army publishes annual reports of the monitoring results and presents them at an

annual meeting to the regulatory agencies. The Army continues to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service any time a new proposed action may affect listed species and was not addressed by the Habitat Management Plan or the Programmatic Biological Opinion.

The Army is working with the regulatory agencies to conduct soil cleanup where soil had been contaminated by lead bullets or other chemicals from munitions or explosives. Following soil cleanup activities, the Army is required to conduct restoration in the habitat reserve areas. To date, the Army has restored 27.9 acres of central maritime chaparral plant community. The Army is currently restoring 33.5 acres, and plans to restore an additional 0.5 acres. All restored sites are monitored to ensure plants are growing back successfully, as specified in the Habitat Restoration Plan. The results of the monitoring are shared with the regulatory agencies, and published in annual reports. If needed, adaptive management actions are discussed with the regulatory agencies, and additional efforts are made to ensure the goals of restoration are met.

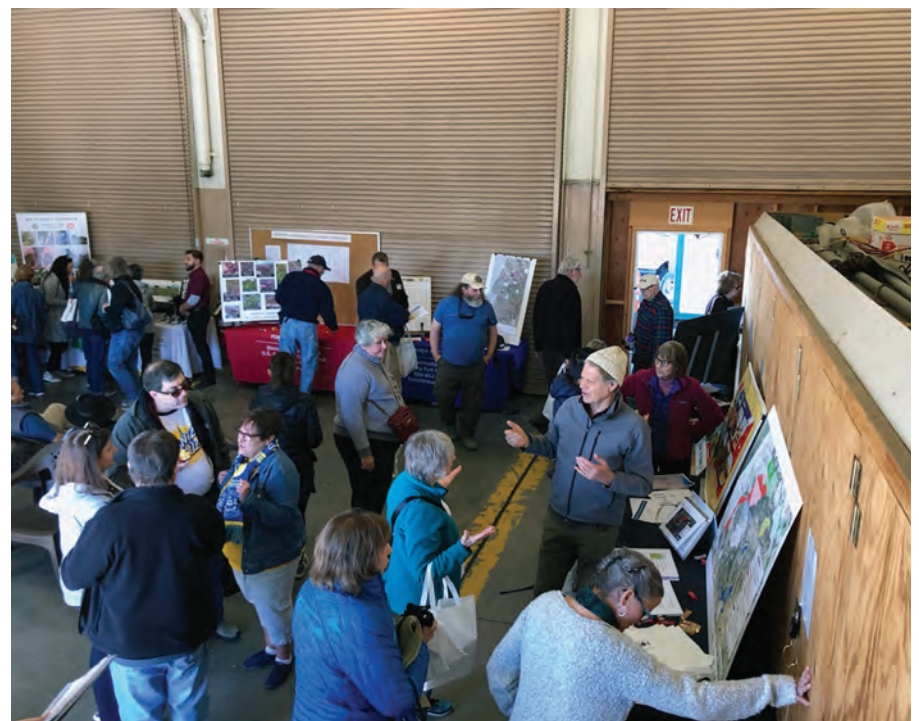
Community Involvement and Outreach

The Army has an extensive outreach program to keep the community informed and involved with the cleanup. Community involvement at the former Fort Ord Cleanup includes assessing the interest of the community through surveys, public meetings and information sessions. In February 2020, we were honored with more than 200 enthusiastic community participants at our Open House/Bus Tour dedicated to soil and groundwater cleanup. However, after March, as the COVID 19 shelter-in-

place requirements for large gatherings evolved, we cancelled many of our long standing outreach events. As there is uncertainty of the requirements in 2021, we will not publish a schedule of activities in this Annual Report. Like everyone else, we'll wait and see how things go the next few months. Current information is at our web site FortOrdCleanup.com. Please check the news section for the latest updates.

The Army also provides displays and tours where community members

can learn about the cleanup and share their ideas and concerns with cleanup officials. While the in-person outreach is curtailed, we are available by email and phone. See the contact information on the last page. Addressing these concerns involves providing information, developing alternatives, responding to comments, and monitoring results. The Army partners with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Toxic Substances Control, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, and other agencies.



On the February open house bus tour. (Left) Taking in the view while at the landfill stop. (Right) A bird's-eye view of the open house.

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Fort Ord Environmental Cleanup

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FORT ORD AGENCY CONTACTS

The Army is responsible for conducting cleanup of the former Fort Ord, but it must do so in a manner that complies with federal and state laws and under the supervision of federal and state regulatory agencies. The Fort Ord cleanup is being conducted under the Superfund or "CERCLA" cleanup process. CERCLA is an acronym for the federal law entitled the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, also known as Superfund. It encompasses cleanup of soil and groundwater that contain hazardous substances such as metals, pesticides, and other chemical contaminants common to landfills, firing ranges, and other military sites. At Fort Ord, the Superfund cleanup is supervised by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Toxic Substances Control and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Under an agreement between the Army and regulatory agencies, each agency assigns a representative to the Base Cleanup Team. Contacts for each of the participating agencies in Fort Ord's cleanup are listed below.

U.S. Department of the Army Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)

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California Environmental Protection Agency Department of Toxic Substances Control

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Special Note: For questions related to the long term obligations for land cleaned up under the Environment Services Cooperative Agreement and transferred from the Fort Ord Reuse Authority to local municipalities, please contact: **Stan Cook**, ESCA Program Manager. Email: SCook@ci.seaside.ca.us or Phone: (831) 899-6773.