

Frequently Asked Questions

Munitions Cleanup: Fort Ord National Monument (Northern Portion)



INTRODUCTION

This fact sheet addresses frequently asked questions about road and trail access in the Army's munitions cleanup area in the northern portion of the Fort Ord National Monument. The munitions cleanup area is about 800 acres and is located north of the former Impact Area.

The Army and the Bureau of Land Management are committed to providing a safe use for visitors, workers, and wildlife on the former Fort Ord. Munitions investigations in the northern portion of the National Monument have prompted additional cleanup work which began in May 2017. As of March 2020, this work is largely complete. This work is largely complete, but one area will be completed in the future.

During the cleanup operations, access to the road and trail systems were temporarily closed for public recreation. By February 2020, all of the roads and designated trails within the munitions cleanup area have been reopened – with some trail additions and realignments designed by Bureau of Land Management. **Please remember that there is always a potential for munitions to be found because of Fort Ord's history as an Army base – even in areas where munitions cleanup has been conducted. Visitors who comply with posted restrictions and remain on designated roads and trails are safe from munitions hazards.** We ask that you **MIND THE SIGNS.**

VISITOR SAFETY

WHAT IF I FIND A POSSIBLE MUNITIONS ITEM?

Please follow the 3 R's of explosives safety:

- **RECOGNIZE:** Do not touch it!
- **RETREAT:** Instead, mark the location; and
- **REPORT:** Call the police—911 to report what you've found.

REMEMBER the 3 Rs



of UXO Safety!

ARE THERE ANY RESTRICTIONS?

Use only roads and trails that are signed open.

In addition, metal detectors are prohibited at Fort Ord due to potential explosive hazards.



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

HOW CAN WE ENJOY THE FORT ORD NATIONAL MONUMENT AND BE SAFE?

We ask that you **MIND THE SIGNS**. When planning a trip into this area, please check the Army's website www.fortordcleanup.com/programs/blm-area-b/ or call 1-800-852-9699 for information about munitions safety.



Bureau of Land Management has set trail use rules for the Fort Ord Monument to help reduce conflicts, protect wildlife and habitats, and ensure public safety. Among them are:

- Use only roads and trails that are signed open for use.
- Never venture off the roads and trails into grassland areas or other off-trail habitat.
- Never start a campfire or use a firework.

Check the Bureau of Land Management website www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/california/fort-ord/know-before-you-go for trail access rules.

Persons violating the rules and restrictions are subject to penalties. As an example, in February 2020 three individuals were cited for trespassing. Each was fined \$185. Follow Trail Rules.



MUNITIONS CLEANUP

WHAT WORK REMAINS TO BE COMPLETED?

In May 2017, as soon as the Record of Decision was approved, the Army began the munitions cleanup in the northern portion of the National Monument. The munitions cleanup area was divided into seven units so that temporary trail closure would occur only for units in which work was being conducted. During 2017-2019, two prescribed burns were conducted, and munitions cleanup was completed in all areas except in one area which will be completed in the future. The prescribed burn and the follow-on munitions cleanup in this area will be scheduled when sufficient resources are available to conduct the work.

While this area remains “in progress”, the Army has completed munitions cleanup on trails within the unit. Based on the status of the work, the Army, Bureau of Land Management and the regulatory agencies agreed to open these trails for public use. This is contingent on recreational users’ compliance with the “stay on trails” rule. Access may be restricted if the trail rules are not followed. Also, when the munitions cleanup in this area is reinitiated, the unit will again be temporarily closed to maintain public safety. We ask that you **MIND THE SIGNS**.



WHAT DOES MUNITIONS CLEANUP INCLUDE?

The munitions cleanup includes removal of all visible suspected munitions and munitions debris from the ground surface. Subsurface removal is conducted in trails and roads, and other selected areas to support specific reuse. Vegetation must be cut or burned to make the ground visible for MEC removal teams to conduct this work. Explosive items are destroyed by detonation.

ARE TREES DAMAGED FROM CUTTING OR BURNING?

The Army has taken steps to ensure that as many trees as possible survive cutting and burning. In oak woodland areas, trees greater than four inches in diameter were limbed up to eight feet to allow access for surface removal. In chaparral areas, the Army conducts prescribed burns because the chaparral habitat depends on periodic fires to sustain its diversity. Trees usually survive burns. The habitat is expected to recover from these temporary disturbances. The Army conducts habitat monitoring according to a schedule coordinated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



WHY MUST THE ARMY BURN IN THE FORT ORD NATIONAL MONUMENT?

Prescribed burning is the primary method for clearing chaparral vegetation to facilitate conducting munitions cleanup. Burning is also needed to sustain and enhance the chaparral plant community and is consistent with both the Fort Ord Habitat Management Plan and the Biological Opinion issued by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

HASN'T THE ARMY ALREADY INVESTIGATED AND EVALUATED THIS AREA A LONG TIME AGO?

The current Bureau of Land Management properties were transferred in 1996. Army investigations were conducted at that time. Subsequent studies concluded additional cleanup was warranted in portions of the northern portion of the Fort Ord National Monument to support the long-term use of the land as a habitat reserve. The majority of this work was completed in 2017-2019. Visitors who comply with the posted restrictions and remain on designated trails are safe from munitions hazards.

The Army’s goal is to minimize access impacts to recreational users during the cleanup, to complete the cleanup as quickly as possible, and to reopen roads and trails for recreational use under the Bureau of Land Management.



Photo courtesy of David Styer

ARE THERE ANY OTHER AREAS OF THE FORT ORD NATIONAL MONUMENT THAT THE ARMY NEEDS TO CLEAN UP?

Within the Fort Ord National Monument, the Army is also conducting munitions cleanup on the former Impact Area. While the Impact Area is part of the Fort Ord National Monument, it will not be accessible to the public until cleanup is complete.

WILL THIS CLEANUP MAKE THE AREA 100% SAFE?

Even after these cleanup projects are completed, it does not mean zero risk -- there is always a potential for something to be found because of Fort Ord's history as an Army base. Maintaining safe public use of the Fort Ord National Monument is an ongoing effort. The Army will continue to work with the Bureau of Land Management to provide a safe parkland for visitors, workers, and wildlife.

DO ACTIVITIES LIKE TRAIL MAINTENANCE BY VOLUNTEERS, WHERE THE GROUND IS ONLY MINIMALLY DISTURBED, REQUIRE SPECIAL PERMITS?

The answer is yes. Construction safety support is a requirement for any ground disturbing or intrusive activities within the northern portion of the Fort Ord National Monument. The Army will continue coordination with the Bureau of Land Management for the safe care of the monument. All volunteer work on trails must be coordinated with the Bureau of Land Management to ensure public safety.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FORT ORD MILITARY MUNITIONS RESPONSE PROGRAM?

- www.FortOrdCleanup.com
- 1-800-852-9699
- U.S. Army Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure Office; Joelle Lobo, BRAC Environmental Coordinator, 1-831-242-7920, outreach@fortordcleanup.com
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9; Maeve Clancy 1-415-947-4105, Clancy.Maeve@epa.gov
- California Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Toxic Substances Control; Brett Leary, 1-916-255-4988, brett.leary@dtsc.ca.gov

REMEMBER the 3 Rs



of UXO Safety!

For more information, visit www.fortordcleanup.com/programs/blm-area-b/ or call 1-800-852-9699

SCHEDULE and ACCESS

HOW CAN I GET INFORMATION ABOUT ROAD AND TRAIL CLOSURES AND CLEANUP ACTIVITIES?

Current road and trail closures related to munitions cleanup can be found at www.fortordcleanup.com/programs/blm-area-b/ and the Army's information line at 1-800-852-9699.

WILL THESE ROADS AND TRAILS NEED TO BE CLOSED IN THE FUTURE?

Munitions cleanup is not complete. One area will be completed in the future. The cleanup in this area will include a prescribed burn which is currently anticipated in 2023 or later. The area will be closed during the prescribed burn and munitions cleanup activities to protect the public.

While trails in this area are currently open for public use, this is contingent on recreational users' compliance with the "stay on trails" rule. Access may be restricted if the trail rules are not followed. Please follow Trail Rules and **MIND THE SIGNS.**

