

# Fort Ord Superfund Site

## 6<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Review

U.S. Department of the Army, Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure Office  
Monterey County, California

### The 6<sup>th</sup> Fort Ord Five-Year Review Process is Underway

The U. S. Department of Army (Army) has begun conducting a formal review of all in-place cleanup remedies for the Fort Ord Superfund Site in Monterey County, California. The results of the basewide review will be documented in a report known as a Five-Year Review. For the former Fort Ord, this will be the 6<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Review; five previous Five-Year Reviews were conducted in 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017, and 2022.

### **The Review Team**

The Army is the lead agency and is responsible for conducting the Five-Year Review at this site. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will review and comment on the report in cooperation with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), and the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (CCRWQCB).

### **What Is a Five-Year Review?**

Five-Year Reviews involve a comprehensive assessment of the performance of an environmental cleanup program and its ongoing protectiveness of human health and the environment.

### **Why Is a Review Conducted?**

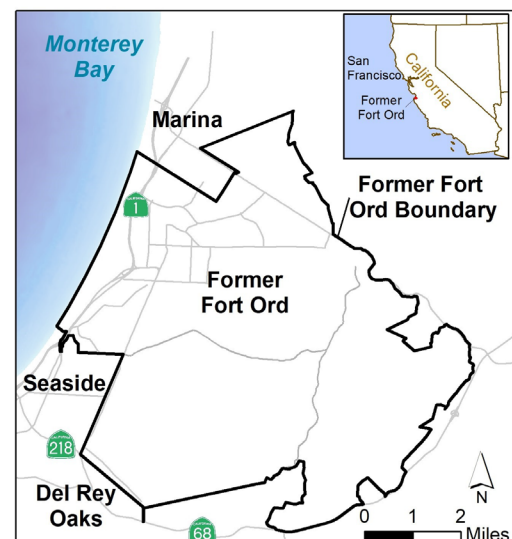
Superfund regulations require a review of cleanup actions every five years after the initiation of remedial actions if the levels of contaminants remaining at a site do not allow for unlimited use and unrestricted exposure. Five-year reviews provide an opportunity to evaluate the implementation and performance of a remedy to determine whether it remains protective of human health and the environment and provide recommendations for follow-up actions, as needed.

### **What are the Main Questions that the Review Answers?**

- Are the remedies functioning as intended and as outlined in the Record of Decision (ROD) documents? (RODs select the cleanup remedies for a site or group of sites and provide the rationale for the remedy selection.)
- Are the assumptions used at the time of the remedy selection still valid?
- Has any other information come to light that could call into question the protectiveness of the remedy?

### **Background**

The former Fort Ord Army Base is adjacent to Monterey Bay in northwestern Monterey County, California, approximately 80 miles south of San Francisco. The former base consisted of approximately 28,000 acres adjacent to the cities of Seaside, Sand City, Monterey, and Del Rey Oaks to the south, and the city of Marina to the north. Highway 1 passes through the western part of the former Fort Ord, separating the beachfront area from the rest of the base. Fort Ord



served primarily as a training and staging facility for infantry troops beginning in 1917 until its deactivation in 1994.

During its active history, up to 40,000 military and civilian personnel worked or lived on Fort Ord. Activities conducted throughout the base, including industrial activities and military munitions training, have resulted in the identification of numerous sites where hazardous substances and pollutants have been detected in soil and groundwater and munitions and explosives of concern (MEC) have been detected in former munitions training areas.

Drinking water at the former Fort Ord is provided by Marina Coast Water District and meets all drinking water standards. For current drinking water quality testing results please visit <https://www.mcwd.org>.

### **Investigation and Cleanup Recommendations**

Since 1986, the Army has been conducting investigation and cleanup actions at the former Fort Ord. Initially, the studies concentrated on identifying chemical contaminants in soil and groundwater. These contaminants were introduced into the environment as a result of industrial and waste disposal activities. In 1993, the Army also began investigating sites where munitions training had been performed and where MEC were known or suspected to be present.

Sites were characterized during Remedial Investigations (RI), and cleanup remedies were compared and evaluated in Feasibility Studies (FS). Cleanup remedy decisions are documented in the RODs. These documents have undergone extensive regulatory agency and public review. Remedial actions are being or have been implemented at the former Fort Ord sites in accordance with the RODs.

### **Updates Since the Last Five-Year Review**

Since the last five-year review, the Army has completed the 13-year habitat monitoring program for 18 Phase 1 habitat restoration sites. The Army is required to restore habitat reserve areas impacted by soil cleanup activities. To date, the Army has restored 61.5 acres of habitat.

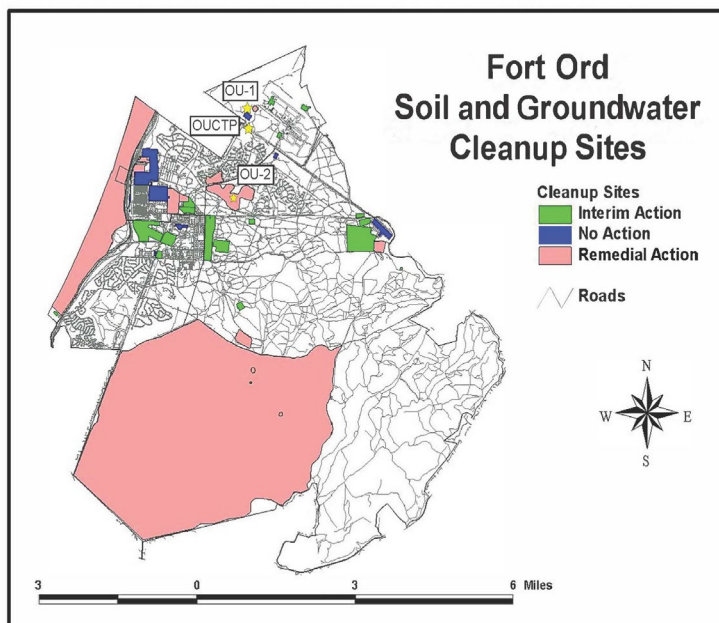
The munitions cleanup of Unit 5, within the Track 3 Impact Area Munitions Response Area (MRA), includes a 130-acre area in the southern portion of the site. Surface munitions removal and a digital geophysical mapping survey were completed in 2022. Ninety-five subsurface anomalies were identified and addressed, and the area is ready for a prescribed burn to encourage habitat recovery once the vegetation has grown back to carry a fire.

The Army is currently investigating potential releases of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, commonly known as PFAS, a class of man-made chemicals that were not previously known as potential contaminants. These substances may be present in soil and/or groundwater at Army facilities from PFAS-containing aqueous film forming foam used in fire suppression and training activities or from other sources. These chemicals may enter the environment through landfills and wastewater due to their presence in consumer products or as runoff to soil and water from other uses. In 2022, the Army completed a site-wide Preliminary Assessment of historical Fort Ord activities with the potential to cause PFAS contamination in soil and groundwater at the former Fort Ord. A Preliminary Assessment is an initial review and analysis of available information (historical records, sampling data, etc.) to determine whether a release may have occurred and the potential sources and type of release(s). Based on the results, the Army conducted a Site Inspection for PFAS in 2023, which included soil and groundwater sampling at 7 sites identified in the Preliminary Assessment report to confirm whether or not a release of PFAS occurred at specific sites recommended for additional investigation in the Preliminary Assessment Narrative Report. The Army recommended further investigation for 5 of the 7 sites. The Army is currently working with regulatory agencies to plan for the RI Phase. During the RI process the Army could identify additional sites that require investigation.

## Soil and Groundwater Cleanup Sites

Soil and groundwater cleanup sites have been grouped into three separate remedial categories. RODs were developed for each group. These categories are illustrated on the figure below and are described as follows:

1. **Interim Action Sites** (in green) are those that had contaminated soil with a limited volume and extent and, as a result, the soils were excavated as an interim action.
2. **No Action Sites** (in blue) are those that require no further action, either because no release of contaminants was identified at the site or because the site activities are excluded under Superfund (e.g. underground storage tank remediation).
3. **Remedial Investigation Sites** (in rose) are those with more complex problems that require significant soil and/or groundwater remediation, development of a risk assessment, and an assessment of the applicable or relevant and appropriate requirements (ARARs) for cleanup.



In addition, three operable unit (OU) sites, which address geographic areas or specific site problems, have undergone considerable investigation and remedial actions. These sites are: OU1, the Fritzsche Army Airfield Fire Drill Area; OU2, the Fort Ord Landfills; and the Operable Unit Carbon Tetrachloride Plume (OUCTP). These OUs are described by their own individual RODs.

## Military Munitions Response Program (MMRP) Sites

Numerous munitions response sites (MRSs) have been identified through archive searches, interviews, and visual inspections.

Types of MEC found include artillery projectiles, rockets, hand grenades, practice land mines, pyrotechnics, bombs, demolition materials, and other items. Investigations and removal actions have been conducted in many sites since 1993. Several MRSs have undergone sufficient evaluations and have been released for unrestricted use (see section under Track 1 Sites). Munitions responses are in progress in two sites: the Impact Area MRA and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Area B. The Impact Area MRA is fenced and danger/warning signs are posted.

Response actions designed to minimize the explosive safety risk to the public under designated future uses are ongoing. Based on the investigation and characterization conducted, RODs have been generated for groups of MRSs to specifically address the hazards (see section under Military Munitions Response).

## Protectiveness Statement from the Previous (5<sup>th</sup>) Five-Year Review

The remedies for all of the sites evaluated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Review (2022) were deemed protective of human health and the environment under the current land use and exposure pathways. Potential exposure pathways that could result in unacceptable risks are being controlled.

## Soil and Groundwater Cleanup Sites

Twelve sites were investigated and recommended for no action under the No Action ROD. These sites had no land use restrictions and were evaluated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Five-Year Review (2007). Based on recommendations in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Five-Year Review (2012), review of the No Action Sites was discontinued.

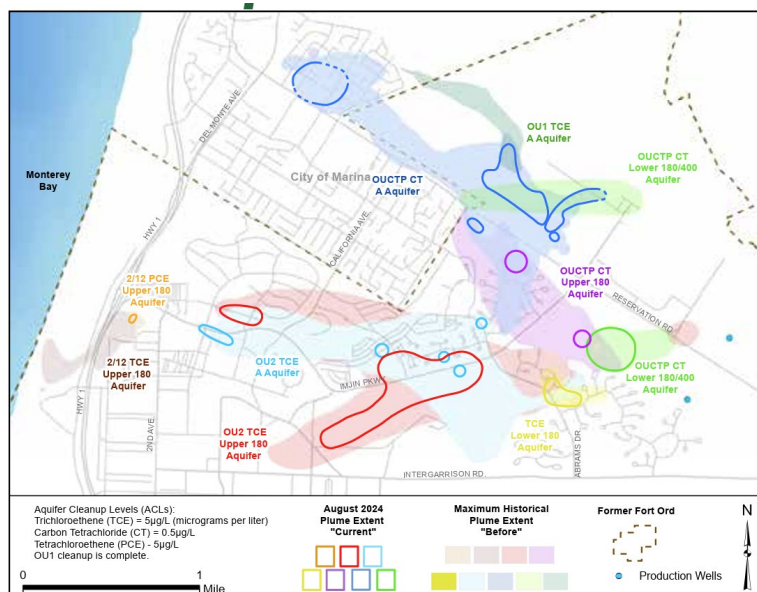
Soil cleanup has been completed at all the interim action sites through excavation, treatment, recycling, disposal of contaminated soil, and backfill of clean soil as identified in the Interim Action ROD. All 21 interim action sites received regulatory agency concurrence for no further action between 2002 and 2012. No new interim action sites were identified in the 4<sup>th</sup> (2017) or the 5<sup>th</sup> (2022) Five-Year Reviews.

## Remedial Investigation Sites

- Sites 16 and 17
- Site 25
- Stormwater outfalls

**Sites 2/12** – Soil remediation is complete.

The Sites 2/12 groundwater plume is being treated by a groundwater treatment plant (GWTP) constructed in 1999. The treatment system has been expanded and modified since original construction, including the addition of wells, treatment and discharge steps. Additional investigations in 2012 and 2013 determined tetrachloroethylene (PCE) in soil gas was contributing to the groundwater contamination, but soil gas did not make a complete exposure pathway into the existing commercial buildings. A soil vapor extraction and treatment system (SVETS) was installed and has been operating since September 2015 as a supplemental remedy to the existing GWTP. After a 2019 study the SVETS has been operated intermittently as part of the groundwater remediation program. Since



2022, the GWTP is operated with periodic on/off cycles to improve contaminant removal. In recent years EPA and State of California have issued new guidance for evaluating contaminant levels in soil gas. The Sites 2 and 12 remedial actions continue to be implemented.

**Site 31** - The selected remedy at Site 31 (former dump site and reported 500-ton incinerator) involved the removal of lead-impacted soil and debris, its placement in the Fort Ord landfill, and a deed restriction. After the initial remediation at Site 31, a section of the site on the north slope of a steep ravine was found to be contaminated with lead. After cleanup of this area was completed, a land use covenant for the north face of the ravine and the area under the power transmission lines was established. The land use covenant prohibits excavation, uncovering or disturbance of the soil, or use of the area as residential development.

**Site 33** - At Site 33, the golf course maintenance facility, pesticides, herbicides, and metals were detected in soil at concentrations that did not pose a human health risk based on the non-residential reuse planned for this site. In addition, results of the ecological risk evaluation indicated that the low level site contamination was not likely to produce adverse effects in plant or animal populations. The remedy for Site 33, therefore, was a deed restriction on the property that prohibits residential use. The property was transferred in 2004 with residential use restriction. In 2020, the property owner conducted a voluntary remedial action at the site, achieving cleanup levels that allow for residential use. A September 2022 Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD) documents the site has achieved Unrestricted Use/Unlimited Exposure status, removing the requirement for the deed restriction.

The following sites and OUs have individual RODs for each.

**Site 39** - The Inland Ranges were reportedly used beginning in the early 1900s for ordnance training exercises. Over the years, various types of ordnance have been used or found in the Inland Ranges, including hand grenades, mortar projectiles, rockets, practice mines, artillery projectiles, and small arms ammunition. Explosive compounds, organic compounds, and metals (principally lead) have been detected in shallow soils at several former firing ranges at levels requiring remediation. Contaminated soils from six former small arms ranges were excavated and placed at the OU2 Landfills under the 1997 Basewide Remedial Investigation Sites ROD. Under the 2009 Site 39 ROD Amendment, contaminated soils from 20 former firing ranges in habitat reserve areas were excavated and also placed at the OU2 Landfills. Because of changes to the exposure assumptions and toxicity data from a revised health guidance value and changes to the model used to calculate lead risk, the 4<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Review identified a need to further evaluate the protectiveness of HA-18D and HA-23D for lead under the residential use scenario. A deed restriction is in place for HA-18D and HA-23D prohibiting residential use. This deed restriction will remain in place until an agreement on the lead cleanup level is reached and, if needed, remediation is completed. The Army is working with the regulatory agencies to prepare an ESD to address a site-specific lead clean-up value for HA-18D and HA-23D. Site investigation will continue within Site 39 habitat reserve areas following MEC removal activities. If soil contamination is detected at levels that require remediation, the contaminated soil will be excavated with the intention to be placed at the OU2 Landfills.

**Site 3** - This site, the Beach Ranges, includes the 17 former small arms firing ranges west of Highway 1 where the Army completed soil remediation under a ROD specific to Site 3. Land use restrictions prohibit residential use. Post-remediation ecological monitoring program was completed in 2016. Site 3 is also known as MRS-22 under the military munitions response program (Track 1).

**OU1** - Studies conducted at OU1, the Fritzsche Army Airfield Fire Drill Area, Fort Ord's first site investigation, concluded that soil and groundwater cleanups were required. About 4,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil were excavated and treated, and the area was backfilled with clean soil. In addition to the soil cleanup, the site's first groundwater treatment facility was constructed in 1988 to remediate trichloroethene (TCE) and other related groundwater contaminants. In 2006, additional groundwater

contamination was detected outside the area of the original treatment system and resulted in significant expansion of the OU1 groundwater treatment system. In addition, quarterly groundwater monitoring in 2005 and investigation in 2006 indicated additional contamination extended beyond the northwest property boundary of the former Fort Ord. In August 2008, operation of an off-site groundwater treatment system began and continued until February 2009 when monitoring data indicated the remediation goals for the off-site area had been attained. In 2014, the original GWTP and the off-site groundwater treatment system were demolished. The Northwest Treatment System was operated until late 2014 and the 4<sup>th</sup> Five Year Review (2017) determined the Remedial Action Objectives have been achieved. The completion of the Closure Plan, including demolition of the treatment plant and acceptance of a closure report, was documented in the 5<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Review (2022). OU1 is no longer required to be evaluated in five-year reviews.

**OU2** - The Fort Ord Landfills consist of the landfill itself and the associated contaminated groundwater. The landfill contamination has been addressed in two steps. First, a small, approximately 25-acre area of the landfill (called Area A) was excavated and placed in another part of the landfill to consolidate the debris. This soil consolidation action allowed for clean closure of Area A which is now available for unrestricted use. Second, an engineered geomembrane cover (or cap) topped with native soil was constructed on all the remaining areas of the landfill (Areas B, C, D, E, and F). A five-to-six-acre portion of the capped Area E has been used for the placement of soils excavated from Site 39 as part of the vertical expansion described in the Site 39 ROD Amendment. Following placement of the Site 39 soils, an engineered geomembrane cover topped with native soil (or cap) was constructed over the added material as part of the Phase I vertical expansion. Soils from future Site 39 excavations and other investigation related waste will be placed in the landfills as part of the Phase II vertical expansion of Area E. A thermal treatment unit is also operating at the landfill to collect and destroy landfill gas. A groundwater treatment facility was constructed in 1995 to remediate contaminated groundwater, primarily TCE, associated with the landfill in the A-Aquifer and Upper 180-Foot Aquifer. In 2018 the groundwater treatment was relocated to a new OU2 treatment facility at the landfill to help shorten the time to clean up the plume. This groundwater treatment system will continue to operate until concentrations of contaminants meet the Aquifer Cleanup Levels. While ongoing remedial activities continue to adequately address all exposure pathways that could result in unacceptable risks, the 5<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Review recommended expanding the groundwater extraction network to improve plume capture. The technical assessment also identified the need to further assess TCE suspected of migrating into the Lower 180-Foot Aquifer through natural discontinuation of the aquitard separating the Upper and Lower 180-Foot Aquifers. As noted below, an ESD is being prepared as part of OUCTP to address TCE in the Lower-180 Foot Aquifer.

**OUCTP** - The OUCTP is located in the north-central portion of former Fort Ord. Carbon tetrachloride was discharged to the ground after it was used to clean radio parts during the 1950s. Data collected for the site investigation indicated that carbon tetrachloride had migrated through the soil to groundwater. A soil vapor extraction system successfully removed soil vapor contamination.

Groundwater contamination has migrated downgradient and affects three aquifers. The 2007 OUCTP ROD identified enhanced in-situ biodegradation (EISB) as the remedy for the A-Aquifer; groundwater extraction and treatment using the existing OU2 treatment system for the Upper 180-Foot Aquifer; and “no action with monitored natural attenuation with wellhead treatment contingency” for the Lower 180-Foot Aquifer. The remedies are all being implemented. EISB was completed from 2007 through 2012, and an additional area was identified and completed in 2017 as part of the A-Aquifer remedy. Optimization and long-term monitoring will continue until the remediation of the plume is complete. The Army is working with the regulatory agencies to prepare an ESD to add TCE to the monitored natural attenuation remedy for the

Lower 180-Foot Aquifer. The TCE is suspected of migrating from the OU2 plume in the Upper 180-Foot Aquifer through natural discontinuation of the aquitard.

### **Military Munitions Response Program Sites**

The MMRP at the former Fort Ord categorizes areas with similar MEC-related characteristics to expedite cleanup, reuse, and/or transfer of former Fort Ord property. According to this process, an area under investigation is assigned to one of four tracks, Tracks 0 through 3.

#### **Track 0 Areas**

Track 0 areas contain no evidence of MEC and have never been suspected as having been used for military munitions-related activities of any kind. The Track 0 ROD was signed in 2002 and requires no action regarding munitions response for the Track 0 areas. The 129 areas listed in the Track 0 ROD consist largely of land that has been developed for military support or residential use throughout the former Fort Ord's history. The Track 0 ROD also contains a "Plug-In" process that is used for documenting no action determinations for other areas that meet the Track 0 criteria. Track 0 is not required to be included in five-year reviews.

#### **Track 1 Sites**

Track 1 sites are areas where military munitions were suspected to have been used, but no further action is required because investigation has shown the suspected training did not occur; the training did not involve explosive items; or training at these sites involved only the use of practice and/or pyrotechnic items which are not designed to cause injury. The Track 1 ROD was signed in 2005 and included 21 MRSs. The Track 1 ROD also contains a "Plug-In" process that is used for documenting no further action determinations for other areas meeting the Track 1 criteria. No additional Track 1 sites were identified since the 5th (2022) Five-Year Review. The "no further action" remedy allows unrestricted use, therefore, Track 1 is not required to be evaluated in five-year reviews.

#### **Track 2 Sites**

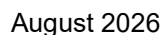
Track 2 sites are areas where MEC items were present and where MEC removal actions have been conducted. Four RODs have been signed for Track 2 sites. The Parker Flats MRA ROD and the Del Rey Oaks MRA ROD implemented land use controls to include the MEC safety education program for site users, construction support, and restrictions on residential use for specified areas. A Track 2 ROD was signed in 2015 recommending no further action at MRS-34, the Fritzsche Army Airfield. Five-Year Reviews are not required for MRS-34.

A Track 2 ROD was signed in 2017 for BLM Area B and MRS-16 located within Fort Ord National Monument, with portions in transferred BLM properties. The selected remedy for MRS-16 and BLM Area B sub-areas B-1, B-2, B-3A, B-4, B-5, and B-6 include the following land use controls; MEC safety education programs for site users and encouraging site users to stay on designated roads and trails, construction support, and prohibition against uses that are inconsistent with habitat reserve (such as residential use). The selected remedy for BLM Area B sub-areas B-2A and B-3 includes: (1) vegetation clearance via prescribed burning and/or cutting, (2) technology-aided surface removal of MEC items, (3) subsurface MEC removal in selected areas, and (4) land use controls. The selected remedial action in BLM Area B sub-areas B-2A and B-3 is largely complete except for one area (Unit A). Completion of the remaining remedial actions within Unit A is pending a prescribed burn during a future burn season. The Army has been implementing land use controls since 2017.



Track 3 sites include areas where MEC items are known or suspected to be present. The Track 3 Impact Area MRA ROD was signed in 2008 and documents the remedial action for the Impact Area MRA. The selected remedy includes: (1) vegetation clearance via prescribed burning, (2) technology-aided surface removal of MEC items, (3) subsurface MEC removal in selected areas, and (4) land use controls. Remediation is ongoing and is expected to take multiple years. Site control actions being implemented include security patrols; fencing, gate, and signage upkeep; and annual monitoring.

In addition to the RODs for the four tracks, an Interim Action ROD was signed in 2002 and addressed sites that contained surface MEC items with sensitive fuses, in close proximity to residential neighborhoods and schools, and with a history of trespassing incidents. Three sites were included in the Interim Action ROD for military munitions – Ranges 43-48, Range 30A, and MRS-16. The selected remedy for these three sites included vegetation clearance via prescribed burn and both surface and subsurface MEC removal. Remedial actions have been completed for Ranges 43-48 and MRS-16. Subsequently, final remedies have been selected. The southern portion of Ranges 43-48 and Range 30A were included in the Track 3 Impact Area MRA ROD. The northern portion of Ranges 43-48 was included in the Interim Action Ranges MRA ROD (see below). MRS-16 was included in the Track 2 BLM Area B and MRS-16 ROD. The 4<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Review (2017) stated the Interim Action MR Sites will not be reviewed again in future Five-Year Reviews. Map below shows munitions response sites at the former Fort Ord.



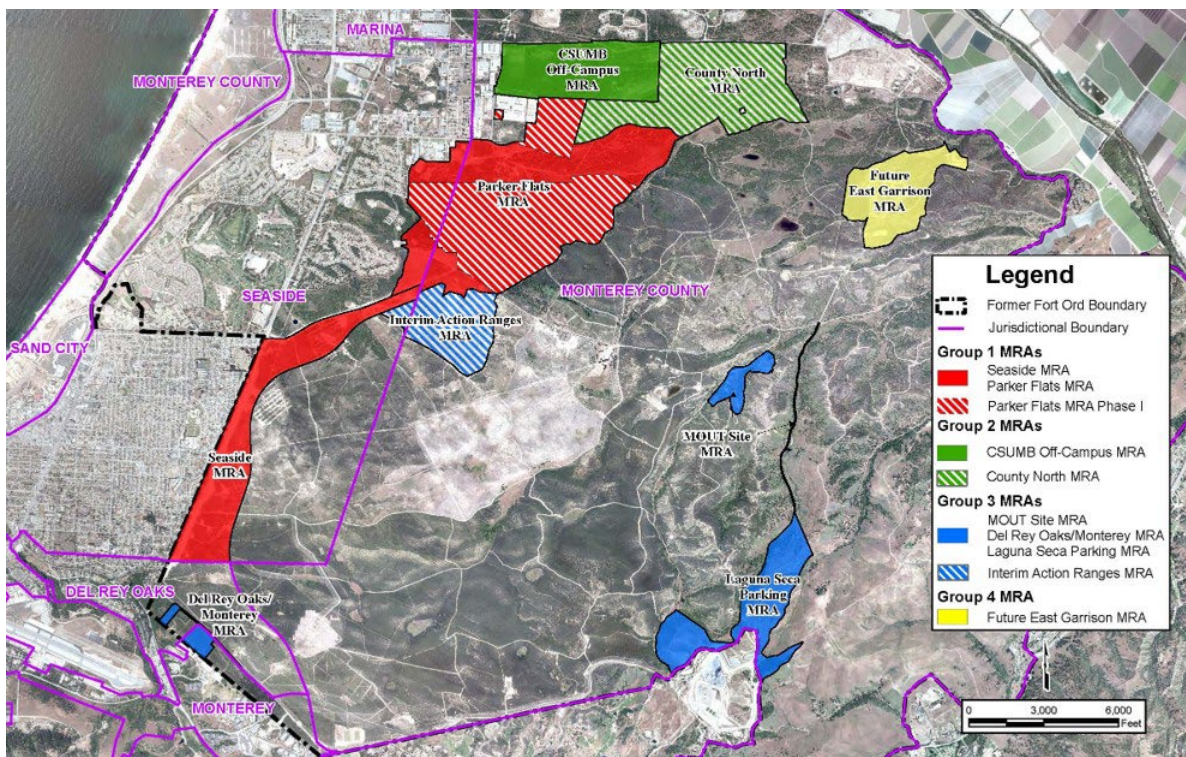


## **Environmental Services Cooperative Agreement (ESCA) Sites**

In connection with the early transfer of a portion of the former Fort Ord, in 2007 the Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) assumed some of the Army's cleanup obligations under an ESCA grant. Pursuant to the ESCA, FORA agreed to conduct the evaluation of MEC hazards on approximately 3,300 acres of the former Fort Ord and conduct remedial actions deemed necessary to protect human health and the environment under future uses.

FORA completed its ESCA remediation program in five groups defined as Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, Group 4, and the Interim Action Ranges MRA (see ESCA sites figure below). The Group 1 MRAs are comprised of the Seaside MRA and the ESCA Parker Flats MRA. Group 2 includes the California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB) Off-Campus MRA. The Group 3 MRAs comprises the Del Rey Oaks/Monterey MRA, the Laguna Seca Parking MRA, and the Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) Site MRA. Group 4 includes the Future East Garrison MRA. The Interim Action Ranges MRA was evaluated as a separate site. The selected remedies for the Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, Group 4, and Interim Action Ranges MRAs consist of land use controls that include munitions recognition and safety training for people engaged in ground-disturbing or intrusive activities, construction support, restriction on residential use in specified areas, and access management and restriction against inconsistent uses (applicable to some habitat reserve areas). The County North MRA was previously documented as a Track 1 plug-in site (no further action).

Initial implementation of selected remedies (land use controls) was completed by FORA, and in April 2020 the EPA provided a site-wide remedial action completion letter for the ESCA project. The underlying properties have been transferred from FORA to the designated recipients. In June 2020 FORA ceased to exist, and the City of Seaside became the ESCA successor. As the successor, the City of Seaside coordinates and manages the long-term implementation of the land use controls on the ESCA properties.



Map above shows the ESCA sites.

## **How the Community Can Contribute to the Five-Year Review**

During the Five-Year Review, the team conducts interviews with various parties, including community members, to collect information about successes and/or problems with implementation of the remedies. The participants in the interviews may include:

- State and local regulatory agencies;
- Local jurisdictions;
- Local residents, businesses, and other concerned parties; and
- Interested community advisory groups and citizen groups.

The Army also encourages members of the community to contact us about site conditions or concerns that you may have through the Army contacts listed below. Interview findings and community input will be incorporated into the Five-Year Review.

## **What Happens Next?**

The Army has initiated its 6<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Review to evaluate sites at which contaminants remain above levels that allow for unlimited use and unrestricted exposure. Following EPA concurrence, the 6<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Review Report will be made available to the public via the website and Administrative Record. This is expected by September 30, 2027. Other documents related to cleanup activities at the Fort Ord Superfund Site (including all RODs and previous Five-Year Review Reports) are also available to the public. A 7<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Review will be conducted in 2032.

## **For More Information or Questions**

Visit [www.FortOrdCleanup.com](http://www.FortOrdCleanup.com)

**Contact the Fort Ord Community Relations Office**

Phone: (831) 393-1284

Toll Free: 1-800-852-9699

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## **The Review Team**

The Army is the lead agency and is responsible for conducting the Five-Year Review at this site. The EPA will review and comment on the report in cooperation with the DTSC and CCRWQCB. The key review team members include:

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Record of Decision (ROD)  
Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD)  
operable unit (OU)  
Remedial Investigation (RI)  
Feasibility Study (FS)  
groundwater treatment plant (GWTP)  
soil vapor extraction and treatment system (SVETS)  
in-situ biodegradation (EISB)  
polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)  
tetrachloroethylene (PCE)  
trichloroethene (TCE)  
munitions and explosives of concern (MEC)  
munitions response site (MRS)  
Munitions Response Area (MRA)

**Special Note:** For questions related to the long-term implementation of land use controls in Environmental Services Cooperative Agreement (ESCA) sites, please contact:

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