

U.S. Army Fort Ord - Prescribed Burn Program

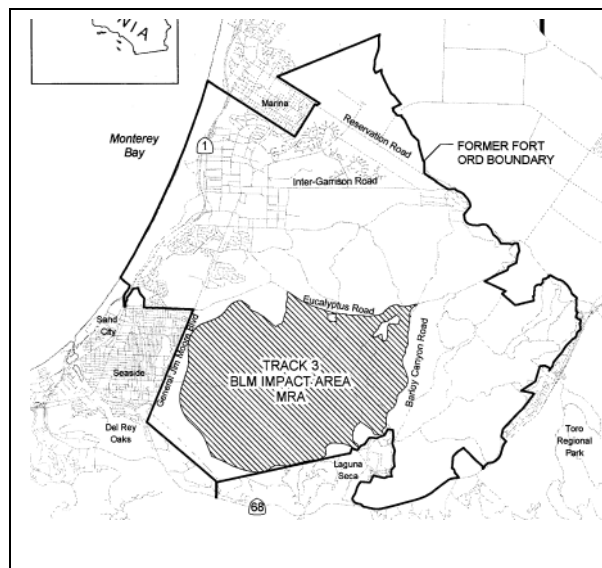
September 2008

The purpose of this Fact Sheet is to describe the Prescribed Burn Program at Fort Ord. In the coming 8 or more years, the Army plans to conduct prescribed burns in about 6,560 acres of the historical Impact Area at Fort Ord. The prescribed burns will remove dense vegetation and expose the ground surface to facilitate the removal of munitions and explosives of concern (MEC), including unexploded ordnance (UXO). The Impact Area, which is designated as habitat reserve, will also benefit from the burns because it contains Central Maritime Chaparral, a plant community that supports several federal endangered and threatened species and is rejuvenated by periodic burning.

Each year, the Army will prepare to conduct prescribed burnings in several areas, or units. These units will consist of about 100 acres surrounded by 45 foot (ft)- to 300ft-wide fuel breaks to make sure that the burn stays within its boundaries and minimize smoke impacts. The Prescribed burns will be conducted under appropriate weather conditions between July 1 and December 31. This burn season may be extended if approved by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The Army's highest priorities for its Prescribed Burn Program are:

- *To conduct the burn without injury to the personnel and the public*
- *To contain the burn within its intended boundaries*
- *To minimize smoke impacts*



Key elements of a burn prescription

- Wind speed and direction
- Atmospheric mixing height
- Humidity
- Fuel (vegetation) moisture
- Proximity to sensitive receptors

WHAT ARE THE DESIRED CONDITIONS FOR A PRESCRIBED BURN?

To achieve these goals, a "burn prescription" will be developed for each unit. This prescription is a combination of certain weather and fuel (vegetation) conditions that would result in a successful burn. It includes key elements such as wind speed/direction, mixing height, humidity and fuel moisture. Distance to homes and businesses, sensitive receptors and areas of special concern (like the Monterey airport) are also considered. Burn prescriptions are designed by burn professionals, meteorologists as well as air quality specialists who are experienced with Fort Ord conditions. During the burn season, meteorologists will conduct periodic atmospheric forecasting to identify potential burn opportunities. Other conditions such as fuel moisture and availability of backup burn resources are also monitored.

For further information call the Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Office at (831) 242-7383 or toll-free 1-800-852-9699, or visit the web site at: www.fortordcleanup.com.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A BURN SEASON?

The following flowchart illustrates how prescribed burns are planned and implemented in a given year. The Presidio of Monterey Fire Department Chief of Fire and Emergency Services (Fire Chief) is the primary person responsible for implementing the burn prescription and for all aspects of the prescribed burn operations. The Fire Chief will make the mobilization decision when optimum burn conditions are reasonably expected, and resources (equipment and personnel) are available.

THE ARMY'S DIRECT NOTIFICATION PROGRAM:

The Army acknowledges that some prescribed burns can affect air quality, creates ash, and can affect sensitive individuals. Therefore, the Army has taken numerous steps to design prescribed burns that will minimize smoke impacts in the surrounding community, such as conducting the prescribed burns when an appropriate combination of atmospheric conditions and moisture levels in the vegetation occurs. The Army will provide information to the community, in advance of prescribed burns, about how they can reduce or minimize exposure to smoke from prescribed burns. These precautions include staying indoors with doors and windows closed and limiting outdoor activity when smoke is present. Call the toll-free prescribed burn hotline at 1-800-852-9699 or visit www.fortordcleanup.com for additional information or to register for the Direct Notification Program.

Experts involved in Fort Ord prescribed burn program

- Presidio of Monterey Fire Chief
- Fire Behavior Analyst
- Meteorologists from
 - Naval Postgraduate School (NPS)
 - National Weather Service (NWS)
 - Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (MBUAPCD)
 - California Air Resources Board (ARB)
- Army UXO Safety Specialist

WHAT HAPPENS ONCE MOBILIZATION BEGINS?

The Army will notify people who registered for the Direct Notification Program that the mobilization notice has been given. Once mobilized, burn personnel, equipment, and supplies may be in place and standing by for several days. The Fire Chief will make a decision to proceed with the planned prescribed burn when optimum burn conditions for the burn unit are confirmed and all other factors are met. Meteorological observations will be made by the burn team to confirm that conditions are within prescription or shortly anticipated. The Fire Chief will confirm that all elements of the burn operation are ready for implementation and sign the burn-day Go/No-Go checklist prior to proceeding with the burn.

WHAT HAPPENS THEN?

A burn will be implemented when conditions meet the burn prescription for any of the prepared units. This means that more than one prescribed burn may be conducted in a year. After the first burn, if good conditions are expected to continue, another burn may be conducted within the next several days. Burn and management personnel, equipment, and supplies will be standing by until the Fire Chief makes a decision to proceed with the subsequent burn or to de-mobilize from the site. The burn team will continue to monitor the weather for the rest of the burn season for another potential burn window; if optimum burn conditions are reasonably expected, the Fire Chief will make a decision to mobilize for another burn. The Army will notify the community about each mobilization notice and each ignition decision.

-- FOR FUTURE REFERENCE --

What area will be burned first?

The burn units are prioritized based on public safety in conjunction with land development. To protect the bordering residential communities from any wildfire risk, units bordering the transferred land along General Jim Moore Blvd. and South Boundary Road (along the western

and southern boundary of the Impact Area) will be given high priority. Burning these units first (and subsequently removing the munitions) will create a safety buffer between center of the Impact Area and local communities. However, for this part of the Impact Area the favorable atmospheric conditions (burn prescription) required to keep smoke up and away from communities and the Monterey Airport flight path occur infrequently. Therefore, in order to continue with the munitions clean up, alternative units in other sections of the Impact Area, where the burn prescription is more likely to be achieved, are also being prepared for burning.

Why are you burning?

Because much of the Impact Area is covered with dense vegetation, the Army must conduct prescribed burns to clear the vegetation and expose the ground surface. Then, when the area is cleared of vegetation, the removal of munitions and explosives of concern can begin. The Impact Area is designated as habitat reserve and will not be developed in the future. The habitat reserve contains primarily Central Maritime Chaparral, a plant community that supports several federal endangered and threatened species and is rejuvenated by periodic burning. Prescribed burning is the only method that can be used on a large scale within the chaparral plant communities because it can support munitions cleanup and promote the health and diversity of this rare habitat.

Want to know more?

To learn more about the evaluation of the cleanup alternatives and the selected remedy, and to read a summary of public comments and the Army's responses, go to the document called "*Final Record of Decision, Impact Area Munitions Response Area, Track 3 Munitions Response Site, Former Fort Ord (Track 3 ROD)*", April 2008". It is available at www.FortOrdCleanup.com.

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Flowchart of the prescribed burn process

