



Guardian

America's First Choice for Environmental Restoration

A Publication of the Environmental Restoration Program

Travis Air Force Base, California

April 2005

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(Photo by Russell Huddleston)

Promising Pools: Five pools of water in the base housing area are no ordinary puddles. They are created wetlands that are home to a large variety of unusual plants and animals. Many species within the pools can only survive when exposed to water for a specific amount of time. Because of the delicate habitat in which they are found, these plants and animals are often protected by federal and state law.

Pools Get a Health Checkup

Annual Wetlands Inspection Shows Promising Results

By Robert Holmes

Travis Agronomist

Whenever Travis AFB carries out a soil cleanup action, precautions are taken to protect any sensitive wetlands near the contaminated area. A wetland is an area that temporarily holds rainwater long enough for a unique group of plants and animals to survive. When a wetland must be destroyed as part of a cleanup action, a new wetland is created at another part of the base to replace the one that is lost.

Currently, five created wetlands that were built in 2001 within a preservation

area inside of base housing are receiving an annual checkup to verify that they have been properly constructed. Known as vernal pools, these sensitive wetlands add to the plant and animal diversity in California and are protected by federal and state law.

To be classified as a vernal pool, several conditions have to be met. The pool must be seasonal in nature instead of a permanent body of water. Soils beneath the pool must be fully saturated to create oxygen deficient conditions, and the pools must have one or more specific plant species that only grow in these soil and water conditions.

During pool construction, seeds from

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Travis Air Force Base, California

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The *Guardian* is a publication of the 60th Civil Engineer Squadron's Environmental Restoration Program (ERP). The newsletter is designed to inform and educate the public about the base's ongoing environmental cleanup program. Contents expressed herein are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense, or the Department of the Air Force. Additional information about the program can be obtained from the public website at <https://public.travis.af.mil/pages/enviro>. Questions and comments about the program may be sent to this address:

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It's Been An Honor To Serve

We have heard a lot about the Travis Air Force Base Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) over the last six months, and I would like to add my reflections and congratulations. I spent a number of years working at Travis and have many memories of the people and activities that took place there. Although initially reluctant to join the RAB, as I felt I had little to contribute, I am glad that I did.

As a representative of the Vacaville mayor's office, I have enjoyed my interaction with fellow board members and Travis restoration folks over the last ten years. Solano County has benefited from the time and active participation of a group of volunteer citizens who have assisted Travis with their cleanup decisions. Although the individuals on the Board have changed over the years, the Board's enthusiasm and dedication to the base have not.

At the risk of sounding too sentimental, I commend the Travis staff members for the professionalism that they showed at each meeting and their leadership in guiding the restoration program through a maze of technical and legal challenges. The Travis staff has always listened to us and treated us like equal partners. Once, I was invited to the base to support the planning of the cleanup of a pesticide burial site, and it felt great to be a part of the process. The base took care of that burial site two years ago and did such a good job that my family would be safe at that site today.

Kudos go to the representatives of the federal Environmental Protection Agency and their state



VIEWPOINT

James Whalen
RAB Community Co-Chair

counterparts who regulate the cleanup program as well as to the environmental contractors who work on the base. They are paid to provide a service, but we often saw their real concern with getting the most out of taxpayer dollars. For that, all Board members are grateful.

It has been an honor to serve as the Board's Community Co-chair for the last six and a half years. One of the best parts of this job has been my talks with the Air Force Co-chairs. Even though they were very busy with the day-to-day operations at Travis, they still found time to attend Board meetings and make us a part of the team.

Although there is still a lot of work to do, I will no longer be participating as your Community Co-chair and Board member for personal reasons. One of the agenda items for this month's meeting is the selection of a new Community Co-chair, and I know that there are several people on the Board who would have a wonderful time in that role. This forum of military, regulatory and community interaction has been a complete success, and I would recommend for anyone with an interest in environmental issues to attend a Board meeting or two and see if this is where you would like to make a difference in your community.



Pools

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native wetland type plants were added to the topsoil, since plant diversity is a sign of good health for each pool. Plants often found in these pools are sedges, popcorn flower,

various rush species, curly dock, and willow. The pools also contain a variety of small animals, such as snails, fresh water shrimp, water fleas and flat worms. These small animals increase the potential that the pools will continue to develop and improve in quality.

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Pools

■ From page 2

Currently, scientists from CH2M HILL, an environmental consulting firm, are conducting hydrology studies on these five vernal pools to evaluate their water-holding capabilities and soil conditions. With this information Travis will be able to make minor modifications to the pools, if necessary, to increase their water retention times and improve the habitat quality for their inhabitants.

“It may look like a puddle of water, but a vernal pool is actually a complex habitat that does not develop overnight,” stated Mark H. Smith, Travis Remedial Program Manager. “It is easy to build a shallow location that holds water, but there is no guarantee that it will attract the plants and animals that make this habitat so unique. We give them time and a little help to encourage their development.”

These irregularly shaped pools were built so that they would blend into a nearby set of natural pools. They range in size from an eighth to a quarter acre. Each pool has reached



Photo by Russell Huddleston

Hydro Habitat: By temporarily holding water during the wet winter months, these pools help to maintain a high level of plant and animal diversity in Solano County.

a different level of plant diversity.

Vernal pool construction work on Travis AFB began in the early 1990’s as a biology experiment. Sponsored by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the purpose of this experiment was to develop mitigation techniques for supporting Caltrans road and bridge construction projects in wetlands. Today, pools from this experiment retain a significant amount of water

and have a wide diversity of plant and animal life, including endangered species. Travis is using the lessons learned from this success story to protect sensitive habitats and support environmental cleanup actions.

“We are pleased with the overall progress that these pools have made,” stated Mr. Smith. “We will continue these pool checkups until we are confident that they no longer need our help to thrive.”



On the ROD Again

By Dale Malsberger

Travis Environmental Engineer

Before Travis AFB cleans up contaminated soil, it selects the most appropriate cleanup strategy and coordinates this decision with regulatory agencies and the public. The Travis Environmental Restoration Program reached an important milestone by issuing the Draft Soil Record of Decision (ROD) for the North, East and West Industrial Operable Unit (NEWIOU) in March 2005. The NEWIOU is a group of contaminated sites that share geographical or chemical similarities.

A ROD is a legal document that describes the agreed-upon strategies (such as excavation) and the level of cleanup needed to protect human health and the environment. Once all of the details have been worked out,

the Final NEWIOU Soil ROD will be signed by representatives of the Air Force, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. It will give the Air Force the legal authority to pay for and carry out cleanup actions at the remaining contaminated soil sites on the base. Once signed, copies of the NEWIOU ROD will be placed in the information repositories listed on page 4 for public viewing.

Although similar to the previous West/Annexes/Basewide Operable Unit Soil ROD, the NEWIOU Soil ROD covers a lot more (18 out of a total of 28) soil sites. It also deals with sediment and surface water in Union Creek, the main water body on

Travis AFB, as well as soil.

“We have had very productive discussions with the regulatory agencies and have reached agreement on a number of issues,” stated Mr. Mark H. Smith, Travis Remedial Program Manager. “We placed most of the technical information into three technical memoranda that focused on groundwater protection, human health, and ecological protection.”

Each technical memorandum relies upon the latest scientific data and risk assessment methods to measure risk at each site and to help with the cleanup selection process.

“We hope to have the NEWIOU Soil ROD signed this year,” stated Mr. Smith. “If all goes well, we should have all of our remaining soil, sediment, and surface water sites cleaned up by the summer of 2006.”



Meeting Agenda

6:30 - 7:00 p.m. Open Forum:

The open forum allows RAB and community members to discuss ongoing Travis AFB restoration program activities with the Travis AFB environmental staff on a one-to-one basis.

7:00 - 9:00 p.m. RAB General Meeting

- I. **Welcome and Introduction to New RAB members**
- II. **Approval of Minutes**
- III. **Additional Agenda Items and Questions**
- IV. **Discussion Topics**
 - NEWIOU Soil ROD Status
 - RAB Meeting Schedule
 - RAB Tour Agenda
 - Election of New Community Co-Chair

Break
- V. **Cleanup Program Status**
 - Program Budget and Schedule
 - Remedial Process Optimization
- VI. **Regulatory Agency Reports**
- VII. **Focus Group Reports**
- VIII. **RAB/Public Questions**
- IX. **Set Time and Place for Next RAB Meeting**

Travis AFB Restoration Advisory Board Meeting

April 28, 2005
7 p.m.

Northern Solano County Association of Realtors
3690 Hilborn Rd
Fairfield, CA



LOCATION OF INFORMATION REPOSITORIES

Vacaville Public Library
1020 Ulatis Drive
Vacaville, CA 95688

(707) 449-6290

Monday-Thursday: 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Friday-Saturday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday: 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Fairfield-Suisun Com. Library
1150 Kentucky Street
Fairfield, CA 94533

(707) 421-6500

Monday-Thursday: 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Friday-Saturday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday: 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Mitchell Memorial Library
510 Travis Boulevard
Travis AFB, CA 94535

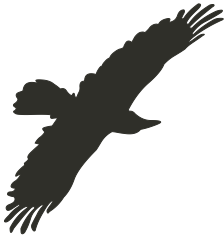
(707) 424-3279

Monday-Thursday: 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Friday: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Saturday: Closed
Sunday: 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.

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If you would like more information or need special accommodations for the RAB meeting, please contact Mark Smith, (707) 424-3062. You can also view our web site at <https://public.travis.af.mil/pages/enviro>



For more information about Travis AFB's restoration program, please contact:

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