Guardian

America's First Choice for Environmental Restoration

A Publication of the Environmental Restoration Program | Travis Air Force Base, California | April 2013

Inside

Acronyms

CAMU: *A Corrective Action Management Unit is a designated area within a facility that is designed to carry out a corrective action, such as contaminated soil management. The Travis AFB CAMU is a soil repository that is built on a closed landfill, located in the northeast corner of the base.*

ROD: *A Record of Decision is a document that explains and legally commits a lead agency to the cleanup alternatives to be used at a site. The Travis AFB Groundwater ROD will be signed by representatives of the Air Force, U.S. EPA, and state environmental agencies.*

(Photo by Glenn Anderson)

Filling the Void: Heavy equipment operators fill an excavation void with a soil/bentonite clay mixture to complete the decommissioning of a lysimeter in a Corrective Action Management Unit (CAMU). The lysimeter was built to verify the CAMU's protectiveness but was no longer needed.

Sealing the CAMU Cap

Lysimeter Removal is Final Step in CAMU Construction

By Lonnie Duke
Travis Environmental Project Manager

In past issues of this newsletter (January 2008, July 2006, and January 2004), we described the primary way that Travis AFB dealt with contaminated soil: the Corrective Action Management Unit (CAMU). The Travis AFB CAMU is an on-base soil repository that is built on a closed landfill. Contaminated soil from several soil cleanup actions was placed on top of the landfill and covered with a compacted soil and bentonite clay cap.

When the CAMU concept was looked at as a potential soil remedy, the biggest concern involved the flow of rain water through contaminated soil, resulting in a long-lasting groundwater problem. To verify that this would not happen, a lysimeter was designed into the CAMU cap. A lysimeter is a device for measuring the percolation of water through soils and for determining the soluble constituents removed in the drainage. If the CAMU cap performed as expected, very little rainwater would reach the water table, and groundwater would be protected.

In 2003, the lysimeter was installed as part of Phase II of the CAMU construction. During this phase, the lysimeter was to monitor the amount of percolation through the cap for one year. This, along with other field observations, would be used to determine if the CAMU cap was protecting the groundwater beneath the CAMU. If so, then Phase III of

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Travis Air Force Base, California

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Facing the Furlough

Viewpoint

Mark H. Smith
Travis AFB Restoration Program Manager

Last month, Col. Dwight Sones, our 60th Air Mobility Wing commander, met with local community leaders to discuss the impact of sequestration on the base and its mission. He made it clear that the automatic spending cuts associated with sequestration would present a challenge to the base, but it would not keep his Airmen from carrying out the Air Force mission.

The origin of sequestration has been documented in detail in newspapers, news reports on television, and the Internet. The key point is that sequestration involves about $2.2 trillion in cuts to the federal budget over the next 10 years. For this year, the Department of Defense (DoD) will have to absorb about $46 million, which will be spread out among the individual services.

As you can imagine, the mission comes first, along with other high-priority responsibilities, such as the care of military dependents and the protection of our nation. However, budget cuts will force military leaders to identify expenditures that can be postponed or eliminated, at least on a temporary basis. For example, the Air Force has already stopped flying missions that do not support readiness (such as flyovers at professional ball games) and cut nonessential travel to conferences and training events.

As the Travis AFB Restoration Program Manager, please allow me to describe the impact sequestration will have on our environmental cleanup program. On the bright side, sequestration will have no impact on the daily operation and maintenance of groundwater treatment systems. The reason for this is that these activities are performed by contractors, and our Performance-Based Contract for groundwater cleanup extends beyond this fiscal year. So, pumps will continue to pump, and monitoring wells will continue to be monitored with no interruption of services.

Sadly, the rest of this report is fairly negative, and I will run through the impacts from least to worst. One of our successful studies that involved the ability of microscopic organisms to clean up groundwater (described in the April 2012 Guardian) will be showcased at the Second International Symposium on Bioremediation and Sustainable Environmental Technologies in Jacksonville, Fla. this June. However, because of the travel and conference attendance restrictions, we will not be there to support the presentation and network these findings with similar projects at other cleanup sites. In the short term, this is not a big issue, but in the long term, the inability to keep up with the latest technologies may result in cleanup delays and increased costs.

Of greater significance to our program is the loss of supply funds that we use to pay for field support materials (such as personal protective equipment and marking paint) and community involvement services, including the publishing of this newsletter. We currently have enough supplies for the rest of the year, but we are short on funding for community involvement. We consider the flow of information about our program to interested community members to be vital to our success, and an increased distribution of our newsletter from hard copy to electronic (PDF) format would help. Please provide us with an email address if you can receive the Guardian as a PDF file. The fact that you are reading this Viewpoint, either in PDF or in print, proves that we are successfully adjusting so far!

By far, the biggest impact of the sequestration will be the upcoming furloughs, which involve mandatory time off without pay. As I write this Viewpoint, the furloughs are scheduled to start in mid-June and will require most DoD civil service employees to take off one day a week through the rest of the fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.

The purpose of the furloughs is to reduce payroll costs so that the DoD does not exceed its budget after taking the sequestration cuts into account. I'm all for

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Furlough

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saving money, but this approach presents two challenges.

First, furloughed employees will experience about a 14% pay cut, and you can imagine how that will affect family budgets and lives. Federal managers will undoubtedly see a drop in morale and will have to come up with innovative ways to "do more with less." Luckily, I work with two project managers who are self-starters and are motivated to promote a legacy of successful environmental restoration that supports the base mission. Plus, pay cuts are tough but are better than no jobs at all.

Second, due to the furloughs, I will lose up to 42 man-days (336 man-hours) from now to the end of the fiscal year, and I was counting on those man-days to complete two vital restoration projects.

Our Groundwater Record of Decision (ROD), the first project, represents the culmination of decades of investigation, negotiation, and cleanup experience. Once it is signed, we will have regulatory concurrence to install final groundwater remedies which will speed up the cleanup of our remaining groundwater sites. However, the lost man-days provide less time to work on this critical document. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will also experience furloughs, which will impact the work on their end. We are working with our regulatory representatives to prioritize our work and keep this document on the front burner. Although it might be delayed, we will work to sign this ROD before the end of the calendar year.

Second, our current environmental contracts are scheduled to end soon, and our next Performance-Based Contract is scheduled to be awarded this fiscal year. All bets are off if award doesn't happen before the end of September! This is because Congress authorizes funding for each fiscal year, and money cannot legally be transferred from year to year. So, if this year's funds cannot be put on contract, they will expire and be lost. Period! So, the lost man-days will make the contractor selection process even more challenging. As of April, we are ahead of schedule to award, thanks to the efforts of the Army Corps out of Omaha and support from the Air Force Civil Engineering Center in San Antonio. I am keeping my fingers crossed and will keep you informed of our progress.

I'm sure most people would agree that the government needs to live within its means, and it would be great if funding cuts were made in a smart manner. No one is happy about pay cuts or furlough days as we have commitments to family, creditors and the public. I intend to do everything possible to lessen the negative impact of this furlough and meet all of our high-priority mission requirements.

In fact, I have a brilliant plan, which I will lay out here for your review, on how to reduce government spending without furloughs, without reducing or eliminating necessary services to seniors, without sacrificing safety and still improve our education system. I intend to...

[*Editor's Note: Not Completed Due to Mandatory Work Stoppage Resulting from Furloughs*]

Lysimeter

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the CAMU construction could take place, and the lysimeter monitoring could be discontinued.

While the lysimeter data showed that the groundwater was being protected, it was decided to continue the data collection to establish a positive performance track record. Unfortunately, in 2008, the original equipment within the lysimeter started to fail and was no longer providing reliable data. The option of replacing the equipment to keep the lysimeter operating was evaluated, but by that time sufficient data had been collected to demonstrate the effectiveness of the CAMU cap. So, in 2010 it was decided that the lysimeter had served its purpose and could be removed.

But why not just leave the lysimeter in place? The lysimeter was built into the northwest side of the CAMU and was essentially a big tub lined with the same material that the CAMU cap was constructed of and containing various measuring apparatus. This big tub had the potential to weaken the CAMU cap over time as the surrounding soil contracted away from the tub. Allowing a preferential pathway for rain water to reach contaminated soil would not be protective of groundwater and would defeat the purpose of the CAMU cap. So, the best course of action was to remove the lysimeter and replace the resulting void with an appropriate soil/bentonite clay mixture.

In June 2012, a construction field team mobilized its heavy equipment at the CAMU to begin the lysimeter removal. First, the lysimeter area was cleared of vegetation. Next, the soil/clay mixture on the lysimeter's surface was carefully scraped away to expose the underlying geotechnical membrane, which is a rubber liner that separates the lysimeter from the CAMU soils. All lysimeter monitoring equipment to include piping, water storage tanks and concrete foundations were removed, and finally the geotechnical membrane was carefully peeled away, exposing the CAMU soil below.

The final steps were to backfill the excavated area and compact the soil/clay mixture to the same compaction standard as the rest of the CAMU cap. Once the area was compacted, grass seed was spread on the soil and watered to ensure germination. With the early rains last year, the grass grew in very well, and the former lysimeter area developed a thick vegetation cover. The CAMU cap is ready for the next significant rain event.

Now that the lysimeter is gone, how can the base verify that the CAMU is still working as designed? During CAMU Phase III, a monitoring well was installed through the center of the CAMU and into the groundwater below. Each year a groundwater sample from that well is analyzed for every soil contaminant that was placed in the CAMU. Although unlikely, the discovery of one of these contaminants would trigger an appropriate course of action to protect the environment.

The lysimeter removal is the last major step in the construction and operation of the CAMU. Starting next year, the base will turn its attention to future long-term monitoring and post-closure requirements for this soil repository.

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 Introductions**

II. **Approval of Minutes**

III. **Additional Agenda Items and Questions**

IV. **Discussion Topics**
- Lysimeter Removal
- Groundwater ROD Update

Break

V. **Cleanup Program Status**
- Contract Award Update/Future Planning

VI. **Regulatory Agency Reports**

VII. **Focus Group Reports**

VIII. **RAB/Public Questions**

IX. **Set Time and Place for Next RAB Meeting**

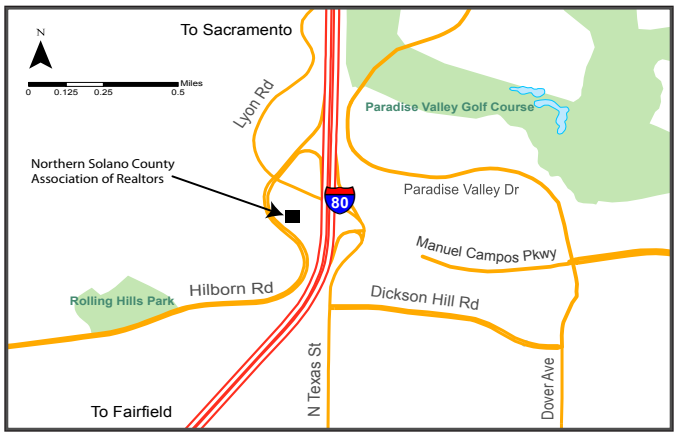
X. **Set Focus Group Meeting Times**

Adjourn

Travis AFB Restoration Advisory Board Meeting

April 18, 2013
7 p.m.

Northern Solano County Association of Realtors
3690 Hilborn Road
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: Closed
Saturday: 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.
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 http://www.travis.af.mil/enviro

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