



Guardian

America's First Choice for Environmental Restoration

A Publication of the Environmental Restoration Program

Travis Air Force Base, California

July 2013

INSIDE

Viewpoint:

For over a year, we have heard about the changes that are taking place within the federal government and particularly the Air Force, but the impact of these changes on Travis AFB has not been clear. The Travis Restoration Program Manager is ready to discuss how these changes will directly impact the Travis AFB Environmental Restoration Program, including what will be lost and what could potentially be gained...2

Next RAB Meeting:

The next Restoration Advisory Board meeting will be held on October 17, 2013 at 7 p.m. at the Office of the Northern Solano County Association of Realtors. The meeting agenda is forthcoming.....4

Editor's Corner

The main article in this edition of the Guardian is unusual, in that it does not report on our progress in cleaning up soil or groundwater on Travis AFB. Rather, it describes a situation that touched us on an emotional level and offered some perspective on our impact on Travis. If, after reading this article, you want to learn more about our four protagonists, please visit <http://www.travis.af.mil/enviro/news/index.asp>.



(Photo by Lonnie Duke)

Furry Family: Four newborn kittens were discovered in a make-shift shack that protected an old monitoring well. The well and the shack were scheduled for removal, so swift action was needed to save these kittens and get them ready for adoption into local families.

Operation Kitty Rescue

Routine Field Work Becomes an Expedited Mission of Mercy

By Lonnie Duke

Travis Environmental Project Manager

Most environmental field work is not particularly exciting, and well decommissioning is one of our more boring tasks. We cannot actually see the water table, so monitoring wells serve as windows to view the subsurface. We collect and analyze the groundwater from these wells to evaluate the water quality and the overall health of local groundwater.

Eventually, all wells reach the end of their useful existence and need to be decommissioned. A typical well consists of a slotted pipe that extends vertically from the ground surface to a portion of the subsurface that needs to be monitored. So, to decommission

a well, the slotted pipe is removed, and the hole is filled with bentonite clay to prevent rainwater or liquid spills from easily reaching groundwater. California environmental regulations have been written to ensure that wells are decommissioned properly.

Last May, the restoration branch began preparations to decommission 9 wells. One well in particular needed to go, because it was interfering with the base's plans to set up a temporary concrete production plant for a large construction project. It was located in a contractor's yard and protected by a wooden shack that ensured it would not be damaged by heavy equipment.

As the base environmental field engineer, I had visited this particular location several

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Visit our Environmental Restoration Program web site at <http://www.travis.af.mil/enviro>



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The *Guardian* is published by the 60th Civil Engineer Squadron's Environmental Restoration Team. 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 web site at <http://www.travis.af.mil/enviro>. Questions and comments about the program may be sent to this address:

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Got Change?

Last month, the three members of the Travis AFB Environmental Restoration Program (Lonnie Duke, Glenn Anderson, and I) traveled to Omaha, Neb. to participate in a Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB), which is a fancy title for a group of professionals with the task of supporting the selection of a new environmental contractor. The January 2013 *Guardian* covered this process in some detail, and my next Viewpoint will announce the results of this selection process.

The January 2013 *Guardian* also announced the merger of three former Air Force agencies to form the Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC), which is a big part of the overall Air Force Civil Engineering transformation.

Transformation. Change. Doing more with less. Environmental stewardship. We have discussed these topics in past *Guardian* editions, but we have not talked about how these changes will directly impact Travis AFB. Until now.

On 1 October, Travis AFB will lose its three restoration program positions. That's right; Glenn, Lonnie and I will no longer be Travis AFB employees. However, this is not bad news but rather a significant change in the right direction, because our three positions will form an Installation Support Team (IST), a team that will be a part of the AFCEC structure.

In reality, this change is not too drastic, since we will remain on Travis AFB and continue to manage the base's restoration program. We will continue to coordinate restoration activities with our regulatory representatives and be available to our Restoration Advisory Board members. And we will still publish the *Guardian* each quarter to keep you informed of our progress.

But that is where the common similarities end. Over the next five years, the Travis IST will become involved with the restoration programs at other Air Force facilities in California. At this time, the details are still a little sketchy. The list of facilities that we will oversee as well as our level of involvement at each facility has not been confirmed, but we should receive our marching orders sometime



VIEWPOINT

Mark H. Smith
Travis AFB Restoration
Program Manager

after 1 October, when we transition from Travis AFB employees to Travis AFB tenants. We will also move out of the civil engineer's command building; we are currently working with Real Property staff to select another building with adequate office space for our equipment and records.

We are also working on a base support agreement that describes the services we will receive as tenants; such as computer/network support, vehicle assignment, administrative support, etc. It is like a move from one city to another; there are a lot of details to deal with, and it means a lot of work.

At the same time, this transition offers some interesting opportunities. First, it will be easier for us to connect with AFCEC's technical and legal experts as well as their contracted resources, so we will not face any significant environmental challenges alone. Basically, the team that supports the Travis AFB cleanup program will become bigger and better at no additional cost. Second, we are big believers in green and sustainable remediation techniques, as described in the January 2009 and October 2011 *Guardian* editions, that offer the potential for improving cleanup performance while significantly reducing the demand for natural gas and electricity. If you had a choice between using electricity to run a treatment plant or run your air conditioner, on a day with triple digit temperatures, which would you choose? If we can promote these techniques at other California facilities, the results will be good for the environment and good for California. Finally, we may pick up a few ideas at other facilities that we can bring back home and use to Travis AFB's benefit.

And that brings me to my final point. Even though we will be working for a new organization and report to a different set

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Rescue

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times in the past and was making one final trip to the construction yard with a can of marking paint. All utilities in a construction area need to be marked to ensure they are not damaged during construction activities, and I was marking the well with paint to let the utility locators know where the construction (or in this case, decommissioning) was to take place.

As I approached the shack, I saw a white flash in a gap between two wooden slats. When I opened the lid and peaked inside, I was surprised to see four of the cutest little kittens huddled in the corner. One of them even managed to scale the inside wall of the shack to let me pet him or her for a few minutes. In an instant, all of the boredom from this project was gone. With the mother nowhere in sight, there was no question that something needed to be done for these 5 week old kittens.

Back at the office, I called several contacts to find out what the base does with stray kittens. For a number of reasons, there is a significant cat population on Travis as well as throughout Solano County. These "community cats" typically end up in the county's animal shelter. The adult cats, which are usually unsocial and unsuitable as pets, and kittens weighing less than 2 pounds are both euthanized. According to the Solano Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), the county euthanizes thousands of cats each year.

However, there was a glimmer of hope for these four kittens. Generally, animal behaviorists estimate that it takes about three weeks for the mother cat to train her offspring how to be feral and avoid people, but these kittens appeared to be quite sociable. They hadn't received mom's training yet!

As fate would have it, Mr. Mark Wilson from the Emergency Management office had moved into an adjoining cubicle in the Civil Engineer command building a short time ago, and he is involved with a local

SPCA chapter. Mark's spouse, Ms. Nissa Stephenson, is a Yolo County SPCA board member and trained volunteer, and as soon as they learned about the dire situation that these kittens were facing, they sprang into action.

Nissa took possession of the kittens and made sure their basic needs were met. Although they did not look malnourished, they were not bashful around the food bowl! Also, they were active and appeared to be in good health. They had the playful qualities seen in good candidates for adoption.

Initially, a SPCA-paid veterinarian evaluates the overall health of the newborn kittens and gives them their required vaccinations. Then, the kittens are placed in foster care for at least two weeks or until

office, this sequence of events made us aware of a reality that few people think about on a daily basis. Many cities and counties cannot afford foster and adoption services, so many of the animals that enter a shelter never come out. This is why the SPCA and other volunteer organizations have stepped up to the challenge. For example, the Yolo County SPCA is a professional, non-profit organization with a governing board, a financial officer and a public affairs officer. According to Mark Wilson, they operate a thriving thrift store in Davis, CA that generates much needed revenue to pay for adoption services and public outreach.

As you know, our mission is to clean up contamination to protect human health and the environment. The environment

portion of that mission usually means we ensure that the soil, sediment and surface water on Travis AFB are clean enough for the critters that make this base their home. We rarely get involved with the critters themselves, but it does happen on occasion. For example, in 2007 we installed special devices into Burrowing Owl nests to safely remove these protected birds from a field that was scheduled for excavation to get rid of contaminated soil.

In this case, we looked into four innocent sets of eyes that entered the world with so much promise, only to find a potentially unfriendly future. We had no choice; we had to act. Somehow, the rescue effort became personal, and it did not take a scientist to tell us that we made a difference in the lives of four kittens and their future owners. And that is what environmental cleanup means to us on a daily basis: making a difference.

Editor's Note

By rearranging the field team's schedule, all 9 monitoring wells were decommissioned on time and within budget. Each winter, base personnel and regulatory agency representatives select wells from the Travis monitoring well network that are ready to be decommissioned and schedule this work for the upcoming summer construction season.



Meet the Mob: Front Row from left to right: Q, Lonnie, and Darth Noser. Back Row: Vortex. [Photo by Mark Wilson]

they are old enough and weigh enough (at least 2 pounds) to be spayed or neutered. The kittens are also evaluated for behavior problems and adoption potential. All four rescued kittens made it through the adoption process with flying colors and became available to be placed in loving homes. All of this effort for four kittens was performed by trained volunteers.

One question remained: What happened to the mother cat? To answer that question, Nissa and I brought the kittens back to the monitoring well shack for a day, hoping to trap the mother and get her spayed. Unfortunately, she never showed. Our best guess was that she was in heat again and had decided it was time for this litter to live on its own.

For many of us in the environmental



Change

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of bosses, we will always consider Travis AFB to be our home. We will take care of our home turf and make sure it receives the same high quality services to which you have become accustomed. That is my promise to you.

In fact, this is why our participation in the SSEB was so important. We need to know that future environmental cleanup work will be performed flawlessly during those times when we are focused on the environmental challenges at other facilities. Finding the right balance of technical ability, experience and cost helps to provide the best value for the Air Force.

So, this is a brief summary of the future direction of our part of the Air Force Civil Engineer transformation. I look forward to giving you the details as to how the IST concept will work in future Viewpoints.



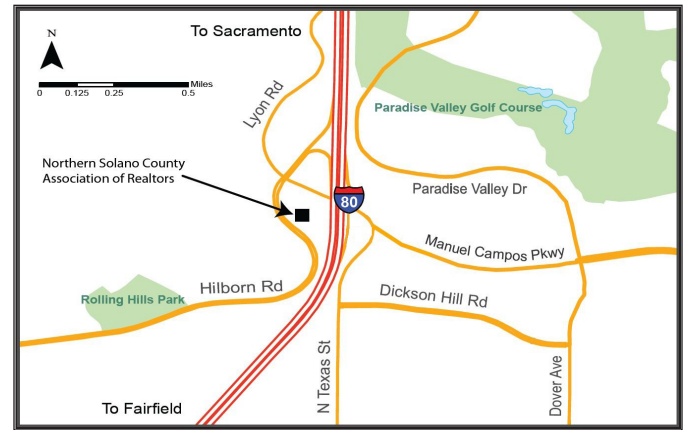
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Travis AFB Restoration Advisory Board Meeting

October 17, 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.

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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