



# Guardian

America's First Choice for Environmental Restoration

A Publication of the Environmental Restoration Program

Travis Air Force Base, California

April 2015

## INSIDE

### Viewpoint:

This year, Earth Day falls on Wednesday, April 22, and there are lots of ways for you to celebrate this annual recognition and appreciation of the earth's environment. You could plant a tree, pledge to recycle more, or walk to the store and leave the car at home. However, the real adventurer might consider joining the Travis Restoration Advisory Board! The Travis AFB Restoration Program Manager discusses the impact of the Travis RAB on the base environmental restoration program and why participation of its members are just as important today as ever.....2

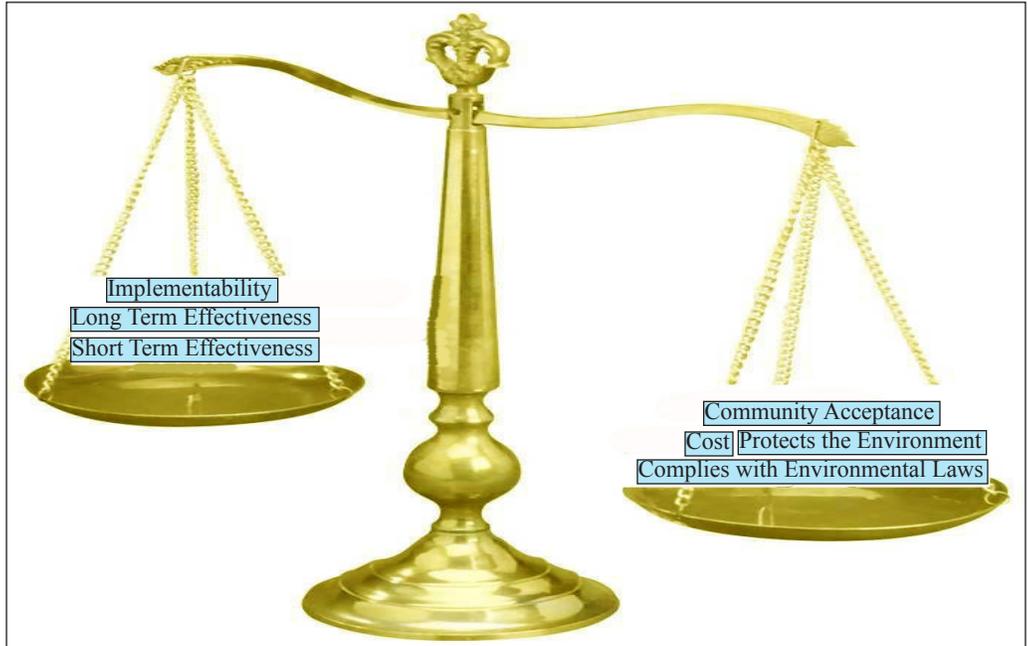
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### Editor's Corner

1. The Proposed Plan public meeting will be held on April 23, 2015 at 7 p.m. at the Office of the Northern Solano County Association of Realtors. A map to the realtors office is on page 4. The Proposed Plan public comment period runs from April 15, 2015 to May 15, 2015.

2. If you would like to order a copy of the Proposed Plan, please email us at [enviro@travis.af.mil](mailto:enviro@travis.af.mil) or write to us at the address on the last page of this newsletter.



**Weighing the Options:** To pick the best technology or strategy to clean up contamination, all options are evaluated based on nine criteria as described in Superfund law. Then, the options are compared, and the preferred option along with the other options are presented in a Proposed Plan.

## Proposed Plan Crib Notes

### A Q&A on Air Force Proposed Soil Remedies for Five Sites

By Glenn Anderson

Travis Environmental Project Manager

In the next week or two, the Air Force Civil Engineer Center will publish two Soil Proposed Plans that support the cleanup of five contaminated soil locations. To help make sense of these documents, the following question-and-answer session summarizes their content and perhaps helps the reader to decide on what he/she wants to do with these documents. Let's start with the basics.

#### What is a Proposed Plan?

A Proposed Plan is a document that presents a preferred alternative for cleaning up environmental contamination at a location. The Proposed Plan summarizes all alterna-

tives that were considered in addressing the contamination and highlights the key factors used in identifying the preferred alternative. The Proposed Plan represents a step in the remedy selection process that is legally required under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980. CERCLA is sometimes referred to as the Superfund law.

#### What is an alternative?

An alternative is a strategy for dealing with environmental contamination. For example, soil soaked with motor oil is discovered next to a car repair shop. Three possible cleanup alternatives are to dig up the oil-soaked soil and haul it to a landfill, to treat the soil with an incinerator, or to cover the soil with a concrete cap.

See **NOTES** page 3



Travis Air Force Base, California

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The *Guardian* is published by the Air Force Civil Engineer Center's Western Region Restoration Support Team, located at Travis Air Force Base. The newsletter is designed to inform and educate the public about the ongoing environmental cleanup program at Travis Air Force Base. 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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# The Future of Public Support

I'm looking for people to join the Travis Restoration Advisory Board! Why? Because later on this month we will be holding two meetings: a public meeting to discuss changes to the cleanup remedies at five contaminated soil locations on Travis AFB, followed by a RAB meeting with members of the local community where we'll discuss our progress and our future. Most of this edition of the *Guardian* focuses on the public meeting, and all that I can add is: "I hope to see you there."

Focus for a moment on the Travis RAB, and specifically the direction that I see public support of the Travis Cleanup Program may take in the near future.

For over 20 years, this diverse group of citizens has stood up for the base when environmental cleanup funds were facing cuts, reviewed technical documents and provided productive recommendations for improvement, promoted the positive contributions of the Travis Environmental Restoration Program and its impact on making the base a safe place to work, and offered excellent suggestions for community outreach and participation. They have attended technical presentations, toured Travis AFB to see cleanup actions in progress, and even sat in a realistic training mockup last year and "flew" a C-5 cargo aircraft to San Francisco and back.

RABs were established to allow interested community members to become personally involved in the remedy selection process. RAB members became stakeholders who could interact with regulatory and base officials. One-way communication became two-way discussions; lectures became dialogue. And it became easier for the Travis ERP team to accomplish their mission when activities and decisions were transparent and open for all to see.

By the end of this year, most of the key cleanup decisions within the ERP will be behind us, and our focus will shift to cleanup management. Our interaction with the Travis RAB and our community involvement efforts should change as well.

What does this mean? To be blunt, this means that there will be fewer topics to discuss during RAB meetings, and that concerns us. We hate to hold meetings



## VIEWPOINT

Mark H. Smith  
Travis AFB Restoration  
Program Manager

just to hold meetings. We value our RAB members' time, and meetings without a valid purpose are no fun for anyone.

We discussed this concern during the October 2014 RAB meeting, and as usual we received some great feedback. Currently, we meet twice a year, so maybe a shift to an autumn annual meeting to review the accomplishments of the previous summer construction season and overall cleanup progress would be worthwhile.

You may ask why add to the current RAB membership. There were several reasons for this: First, the need to review technical progress reports will only increase in the next few years, and this would offer local residents a great opportunity to use their education and past work experience to contribute to this cleanup effort (it also probably looks good on a resume!). Our Technical Review Focus Group has been busy with work plan reviews and could definitely use some help.

Second, it is important that the cities of Fairfield, Suisun and Vacaville are well represented in any group that has a potential impact on Travis AFB, and that includes the Travis RAB. If a local resident has a question or concern about environmental issues, it is helpful if he/she can contact someone who lives in their part of Solano County.

We will continue to use modern communication technology to distribute the latest ERP information. Our public website contains a lot of good information, and we encourage all *Guardian* readers to switch to a PDF version. This saves time, paper, and mailing costs. It is also a lot easier to recycle an electronic file! If interested in becoming a Travis RAB member, please contact Mr. James Spellman from the Travis Public Affairs office or send an email directly to our office. Mr. Spellman's address, phone number and email address as well as our email address are shown on the left side of this page. ✈

## Notes

■ From page 1

*What is a key factor?*

A key factor is a consideration that makes one alternative more attractive than another one. CERCLA requires an alternative to be evaluated based on nine criteria (overall protection of human health and the environment, compliance with legal requirements, cost, etc.). Based on this evaluation, certain considerations may highlight one alternative's advantages over all the rest.

Note that an alternative is dropped if it does not protect the environment or it violates a federal or state law. At that point, there is no reason to evaluate it further.

*What does a Proposed Plan do?*

It gives the local community a voice in the decision-making process. Neighbors of contaminated property may disagree on the key factors associated with a preferred alternative. In the motor oil example, the repair shop owner may prefer a concrete cap as the solution to this environmental problem, based on cost. However, the owner's neighbors may not agree, based on concerns over the potentially adverse impact of the oil on their drinking water. Community acceptance is one of the nine CERCLA criteria, and the Proposed Plan is used to get community feedback on all alternatives, including the preferred one.

*When can a property owner actually start to clean up the contamination?*

Once community feedback is obtained, the property owner issues a legally-binding document, known as a Record of Decision. The ROD summarizes all available information on the contaminated site, describes the evaluation of the potential alternatives based on the nine CERCLA criteria, and selects the final remedy. The ROD goes into effect when it is signed by the property owner and the federal or state agency (or both) that provided regulatory oversight of the property. Then, the cleanup can start.

Now let's look at the two Travis AFB Proposed Plans.

*Can you summarize the reasons why the Propose Plans were written?*

The Air Force wants to clean up five locations on Travis AFB with contaminated soil but had already agreed to a remedy

(Land Use Controls) that allowed contaminated soil to remain in place. Basically, the Air Force changed its mind and wants to pursue more active remedies. To do that, the Air Force has to amend its soil RODs to change the remedy at these five locations. The Proposed Plans are needed to obtain community acceptance of this remedy change.

*What was wrong with the original LUC remedy? Didn't they offer enough protection of human health or the environment?*

Actually, Travis AFB has had no problem with enforcing and maintaining LUCs at any of its contaminated areas. Each location is inspected routinely to ensure that property use is restricted, and there are multiple safeguards in place to prevent unauthorized soil disturbances.

*Why is the Air Force changing its mind now? What benefit does the Air Force gain with this remedy change?*

A more active remedy would reduce the Air Force's environmental liability and is attractive as a good business practice. However, the biggest considerations involve cost. Even though a more active remedy is more expensive than LUC maintenance, a long-term cost assessment shows the LUCs are not as cheap as originally thought, making them less appealing.

Second, some soil cleanup costs have actually gone down over time. For example, one location (Railhead Munitions Staging Area) is at the end of a former railroad track. While the track was still active, a potential soil cleanup would have required a rebuilding of the track after the cleanup was complete, which was a significant cost issue. Today, the track is decommissioned, so this requirement is no longer valid, resulting in a cost reduction.

Finally, most of the contaminated soil is located in industrial areas that could support future mission requirements. If a new mission requires the construction of a new facility, and base managers identify a LUC property as the best facility construction location, then it would take time to get regulatory permission to remove the LUCs and allow the construction to take place. At best, this could delay the request for construction funds and the siting of the new facility. At worst, it would require the soil cleanup and the facility construc-

tion to overlap, which would complicate the funding and management of both tasks and increase their costs.

The bottom line is it is best to remove the contaminated soil now before it becomes a mission-essential requirement.

*Why are you issuing two Proposed Plans? Can't you describe what you want to do in one document?*

Travis AFB is divided into two operable units: the North, East, West Industrial Operable Unit (NEWIOU) and the West/Annexes/Basewide Operable Unit (WABOU). OUs were established to facilitate the investigation and cleanup of multiple contaminated locations. Two locations are in the NEWIOU, and three locations are in the WABOU. The original decisions to apply LUCs to these locations were documented in two OU-specific RODs. So, to select new remedies for these five locations, two ROD amendments are needed, and a Proposed Plan is needed for each ROD amendment.

*What do you want us to do with these Proposed Plans?*

Even if you only have a casual interest in environmental issues, we ask that you read these Proposed Plans and provide your thoughts on the preferred remedies. Each document describes multiple ways to provide your feedback (by email, phone, etc.) and ensures that your voice is heard. If you have no interest in this program, please consider giving these documents to a friend or neighbor who may be interested in this local environmental topic.

*What do we get if we participate in your remedy selection process?*

As an interested civic-minded community member, you get the warm satisfaction of participating in an open government program that benefits one of the biggest employers in Solano County, along with our gratitude for helping us with the remedy selection process. Also, we publish the names of the reviewers and their oral or written comments (and our responses) in each ROD amendment (unless you want to remain anonymous). Sorry, we offer no cash or tax breaks!

To request a PDF version of either Proposed Plan or have any additional questions, please send an email to [enviropa@travis.af.mil](mailto:enviropa@travis.af.mil) with your request or questions.



## Meeting Agenda

### 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. Proposed Plan Public Mtg:

Attendees will learn about the Air Force proposal to change the remedy at five soil sites on Travis AFB from Land Use Controls to a more active cleanup remedy and will have the opportunity to provide their comments on this proposal.

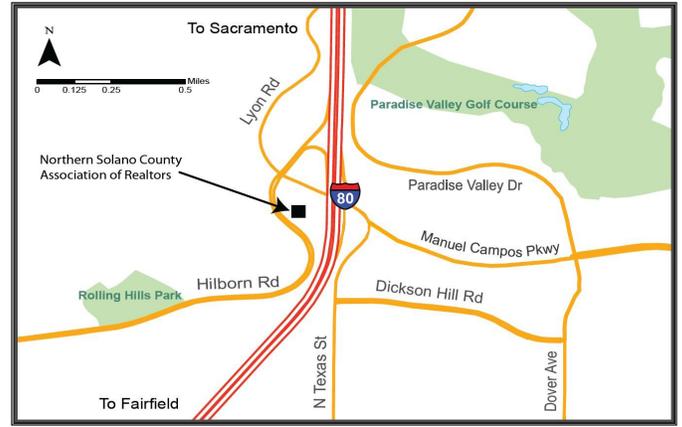
### 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. RAB General Meeting

- I. **Welcome and Introductions**
- II. **Approval of Minutes**
- III. **Additional Agenda Items and Questions**
- IV. **Discussion Topics**
  - Groundwater Cleanup Update
  - Break
- V. **Cleanup Program Status**
  - Community Involvement Update
- 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 23, 2015  
8 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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