



# Environmental Action **UPDATE**

A Quarterly Newsletter About Environmental Activities at McClellan, California

April - June 2002

## **As tenants move in, Air Force moves to ensure health and safety**

The Air Force has made the protection of health and safety a priority since tenants began occupying property and buildings on or near areas of known environmental contamination at the former McClellan Air Force Base. The contamination may be present in the soil, groundwater, or in the buildings themselves, but Air Force officials have put safeguards in place to ensure new occupants at McClellan are not

exposed to contamination. Lease properties were environmentally surveyed and any necessary restrictions identified in the leases.

The primary way a tenant could be exposed to contamination is by digging in an area of contaminated soil. Digging might be necessary to erect fence posts or signs or to construct parking areas.

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*In celebration of Creek Week 2002, more than 20 volunteers and their families joined forces to clear McClellan's waterways of the debris that floats into the channels and creeks during high water season. The debris clogs the drainage paths and can harm aquatic life if not removed. Creek Week is an annual county-wide event organized by the Urban Creeks Council. The volunteer effort at McClellan on 20 April was organized by Steve Mayer, Air Force Base Conversion Agency; Conny Mitterhofer, Montgomery Watson Harza, Inc.; and Molly Enloe, Parsons, Inc.*

To protect workers from exposure, the Air Force requires tenants to apply for an ‘encroachment permit’ before digging around buildings. Air Force officials review the permit to determine if the proposed digging is in an area of contamination. In areas of moderate-to-low contamination, the Air Force may grant a digging permit as long as the tenant develops a health and safety plan and follows the Air Force’s soils management program.

Air Force officials will not approve digging in areas with high levels of contamination. The Air Force will conduct ‘emergency digs’ in cases when digging is required in these areas, such as to make emergency repairs to an underground utility line.

To prevent exposure to contaminated groundwater, the Air Force and county restrict tenants from installing groundwater wells.

Some buildings at McClellan may contain asbestos or lead-based paint, but these items are not a health hazard unless remodeling or construction occurs. The potential for asbestos and lead-based paint in a particular building is specifically noted in the lease, as is the requirement for a permit before construction or remodeling. For building modifications, tenants must submit an asbestos disposal plan. They must also comply with lease requirements regarding lead-based paint.

Other tools the Air Force uses to ensure tenant safety include the Tenant Communication Plan, posted signs and site visits. Under the Tenant Communication Plan, the Air Force coordinates with the County of Sacramento, McClellan Park and tenants to inform all the stakeholders at

McClellan about the Air Force’s cleanup activities. Warning signs are placed around cleanup sites to notify members of the public about the hazards associated with these areas and inform them of whom to call if they have questions or concerns. “Air Force field staff also conduct daily inspections of cleanup sites to ensure equipment is working properly and has not been tampered with,” explained Rick Solander of the Air Force Base Conversion Agency. Additional fencing and security locks have also been installed.

Site visits are conducted periodically by the Air Force to ensure tenants are following lease requirements designed to protect health and safety. “Tenants have been very cooperative in correcting any discrepancies,” Solander added.

As new tenants move in, the Air Force will continue to inform new occupants of lease restrictions and ongoing cleanup activities. Continued coordination and communication among the Air Force, the county, McClellan Park and tenants will ensure human health and safety. Eventually, all parcels of cleaned property are released to the County of Sacramento and it becomes the county’s responsibility.■



Access to cleanup activities, such as this soil washing operation, is restricted in order to protect public health.



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The *Environmental Action Update* is a publication of the Air Force Base Conversion Agency (AFBCA) at McClellan, California, designed to keep the public informed of environmental activities at the base. For questions, comments, or to be added to the mailing list, please write to AFBCA/DD-McClellan, 3411 Olson Street, McClellan, CA 95652-1003 or phone (916) 643-1742 ext. 233.

[www.afbca.hq.af.mil/mcclellanem/](http://www.afbca.hq.af.mil/mcclellanem/)

BRAC Environmental Coordinator **Paul Brunner**  
Community Relations Coordinator and Editor **Dawn Young**

## McClellan RAB learns about soil vapor extraction

On April 23, Restoration Advisory Board members learned about soil vapor extraction technology and the progress of the SVE program at McClellan. Community RAB member Paul Green said, "I appreciated that the presentation was designed for RAB members. It gives us the foundation we need to explain these topics to others and to advise the Air Force. That's our role

as RAB members." Community RAB member Gary Collier said, "The training was essential in understanding the mechanisms by which the pollutants migrate within the soils as well as our aquifer. More importantly, the training solidified my concerns for implementing an intensive program to monitor our community's water supplies, including transuranic pollutants." ■

*Ed Tarter, URS, uses a model to demonstrate to (clockwise) Mark Malinowski, DTSC; RAB members Lola Warrick, Gary Collier, and Bill Gibson; Paul Graff, URS; and Doug Self, AFBCA, how contaminated vapors are removed from below the ground surface.*



## Meet the RAB

**Katy Jacobson** is the Deputy Director of Sacramento County's Department of Economic Development. She is the County Board of Supervisors' representative on the RAB and serves on behalf of the community and the county's interest in economic development of the former base. By serving on the RAB, Katy says she would like to "succeed in improving the commitment of funding and the schedules for the restoration program at McClellan." ■

*The Professional Soil Scientists of California held its 2002 annual conference at McClellan in March. The keynote speaker was Paul Brunner, McClellan Base Realignment and Closure Environmental Coordinator. Brunner also hosted a tour of the McClellan environmental sites.*



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# Community gives input on cleanup decisions

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## Air Force develops 'no further action' proposal

Air Force officials will soon release a proposal recommending that no soil cleanup action is required for a number of the Installation Restoration Program sites at the former McClellan Air Force Base. Release of the no further action proposed plan is expected in fall 2002.

Investigation of these sites began after interviews with former McClellan employees and record searches identified the sites as potentially contaminated areas. After investigation, some of these sites were found to have no soil contamination; the others were found to have contamination below levels of concern for human health or ecological risks. Groundwater contamination is covered under a separate decision process.

The Air Force, along with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, reviewed the remedial investigation reports for these sites to ensure that a decision for no soil cleanup action meets the two primary cleanup criteria:

- Overall protection of human health and the environment; and
- Compliance with 'applicable or relevant and appropriate requirements.'

('Applicable or relevant and appropriate requirements' is a phrase that refers to the federal, state and local environmental and health standards and requirements that apply to a site.)

The Air Force will make a final decision on how to handle these 'no further action' sites after reviewing and considering all information submitted during the 30-day public comment period. The 'no further action' decision may be modified or another response action may be selected based on new information from the public comments. Therefore, the public is encouraged to review and comment on the Air Force's preferred alternative: no soil cleanup action. ■

## Remedial response process - what is it?

Community members will soon have an opportunity to give their input on proposed cleanup decisions.

Identifying, evaluating and addressing environmental contamination is called the 'remedial response process,' and it consists of the following steps:

- An evaluation of available information to determine whether contaminants may have been released to the environment at a given location;
- A comprehensive investigation of that location;
- An evaluation of the investigation results to determine if any cleanup is needed and, if so, how much;
- A determination of the most protective and cost-effective method for addressing that contamination, after taking public input into consideration; and
- The design, implementation and operation of the cleanup remedy.

The Air Force's program to implement cleanup is called the Installation Restoration Program. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been authorized to oversee Superfund implementation. The goals of the McClellan cleanup program are to protect human health and the environment and to clean up contamination resulting from past base activities.

As the Air Force works toward these goals, it must meet regulatory requirements, meet the public's needs, use program funds efficiently, and facilitate reuse of McClellan property. Documents pertaining to the investigations and analyses of Installation Restoration Program sites are available at McClellan's Information Repository.

Over the next five years, the Air Force expects to prepare eight proposed plans identifying the preferred remedies for all the Installation Restoration Program sites. Proposed plans are part of the environmental investigation and cleanup process followed by McClellan officials in accordance with federal regulations.

**Proposed plans and records of decision - what are they?**

A proposed plan is an important step in the cleanup process because it is the community's opportunity to review and comment on a pending remedy decision.

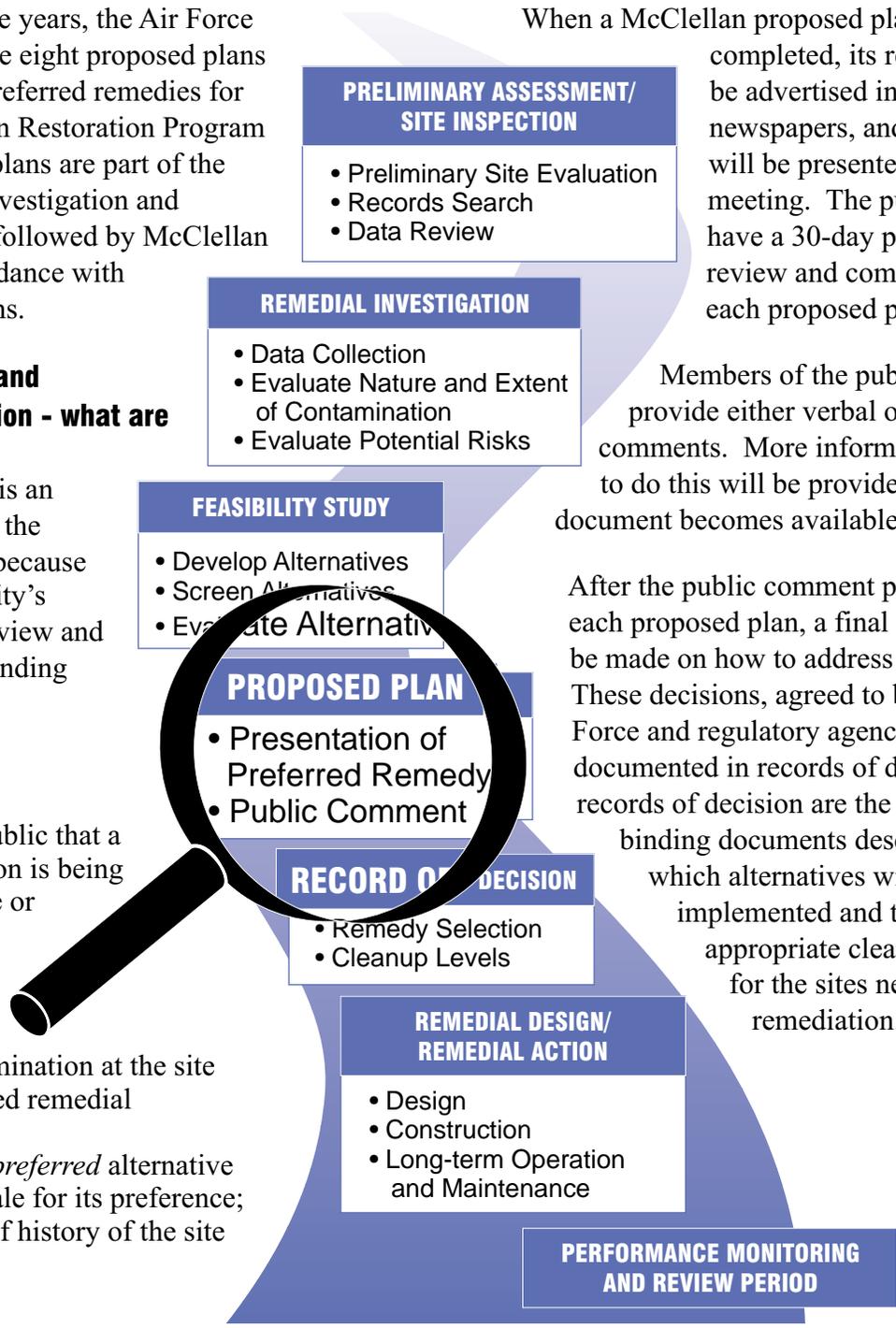
A proposed plan:

- Notifies the public that a remedy decision is being made for a site or group of sites;
- Identifies various ways to address contamination at the site (these are called remedial alternatives);
- Identifies the *preferred* alternative and the rationale for its preference;
- Presents a brief history of the site or sites.

When a McClellan proposed plan is completed, its release will be advertised in local newspapers, and the plan will be presented at a public meeting. The public will have a 30-day period to review and comment on each proposed plan.

Members of the public may provide either verbal or written comments. More information on how to do this will be provided when each document becomes available for review.

After the public comment period for each proposed plan, a final decision will be made on how to address each site. These decisions, agreed to by the Air Force and regulatory agencies, will be documented in records of decision. The records of decision are the legally binding documents describing which alternatives will be implemented and the appropriate cleanup levels for the sites needing remediation. ■



## The McClellan Information Repository/ Administrative Record

**Building 10, First Floor of the West End,  
3411 Olson Street, McClellan**

8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday - Thursday and every other Friday

For questions about the Repository or special visit needs, please call the librarian, Laraine McQuillen, at (916) 643 1250, Ext. 239.

## Proposed early action will address metals issue

Air Force officials have developed plans to remove a metal called hexavalent chromium from extracted groundwater by upgrading McClellan's Groundwater Treatment Plant. They are also investigating the reason for the presence of this metal in McClellan's groundwater.

Treated water from the GWTP is usually discharged to Magpie Creek; however, recent sampling has shown levels of the metal slightly exceed the monthly average discharge limit that protects freshwater aquatic life. The levels detected, however, are not a drinking water concern.

When monthly averages of hexavalent chromium are higher than regulatory limits for discharge to surface water (such as Magpie Creek), the treated groundwater is discharged to the Sacramento County sanitary sewer system.

### Modifying the GWTP to treat metals

McClellan's GWTP is designed to treat volatile organic compounds such as trichloroethene, a compound commonly used in industrial cleaning solvents. The plant needs to be modified so it can also remove hexavalent chromium. The Air Force is pursuing the GWTP modifications as a time-critical removal action because of limits on the volume of water that can be sent to the sewer system, the reduced volume of contaminated groundwater extracted, and the threat to freshwater aquatic

life if the water is discharged to Magpie Creek. The early action is necessary to avoid turning off additional groundwater extraction wells, possibly slowing the progress of the groundwater cleanup program.

### Finding the cause

The Air Force, with the help of regulatory agencies, is designing several studies to look at the possible reasons for the presence of hexavalent chromium in groundwater at McClellan:

- A study of upgradient and off-site groundwater will help identify if the hexavalent chromium concentrations are originating from an area outside McClellan.
- A metallurgical study will investigate if stainless steel components within extraction wells are deteriorating, contributing to the hexavalent chromium levels.
- Groundwater samples collected during upcoming groundwater monitoring activities will be analyzed for hexavalent chromium under the Groundwater Monitoring Program. The resulting data will help determine if there is a source of hexavalent chromium contamination from past on-base activities. Low levels of hexavalent chromium have been detected in almost all of the McClellan groundwater extraction wells and at almost all depths, which leads scientists to suspect that at least some of the hexavalent chromium may be naturally occurring and not associated with industrial activities at the former base.

The *McClellan Environmental Action Update* will continue to report on the hexavalent chromium issue as treatment and studies progress. The public will be kept informed as the Air Force takes steps necessary to move forward with the removal action. ■



**McClellan officials plan to modify the Groundwater Treatment Plant so that it can remove hexavalent chromium from groundwater.**

## Drums inventoried at Confirmed Site 10

To date, 222 new drums have been excavated, opened and their contents segregated in the drum inventory tent at Confirmed Site 10, an inactive disposal site with radiological contamination. Inside the large weatherization tent, a small tent was constructed to inventory the drums unburied at CS 10. This smaller tent is equipped to protect workers from contaminated materials they might find in the drums.

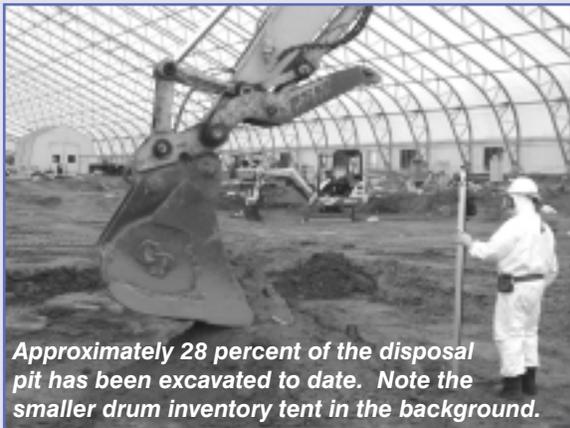
A 'glove box' has been constructed within the drum inventory tent for use in handling items removed from drums with higher levels of radioactivity. The glove box is approximately 5 feet long, 3 feet wide and 3 feet high. This glove box is so named because the only access to the inside of the box is through one of two rubber gloves mounted on either side of the box. The glove box is placed over a drum with higher levels



*Workers open a drum with higher levels of radioactivity*

of radioactivity, and a vacuum is activated to place the inside of the glove box under negative pressure. Air exiting the glove box passes through a high-efficiency particulate air filter. The worker can then place a hand and arm into the glove and remove items from the drum, examine them, and scan the items for radioactivity while a nearby worker records the information. Use of the glove box provides additional protection against radioactive dust release.

Items most commonly found in the drums are laboratory glassware such as bottles and test tubes. Some glassware contained residual amounts of americium, plutonium, activated silver, europium, cesium, thorium, curium, and cobalt. Other interesting items include McClellan bulletins from the early 1960s and the wrapper from a chocolate candy bar that cost 10 cents. ■



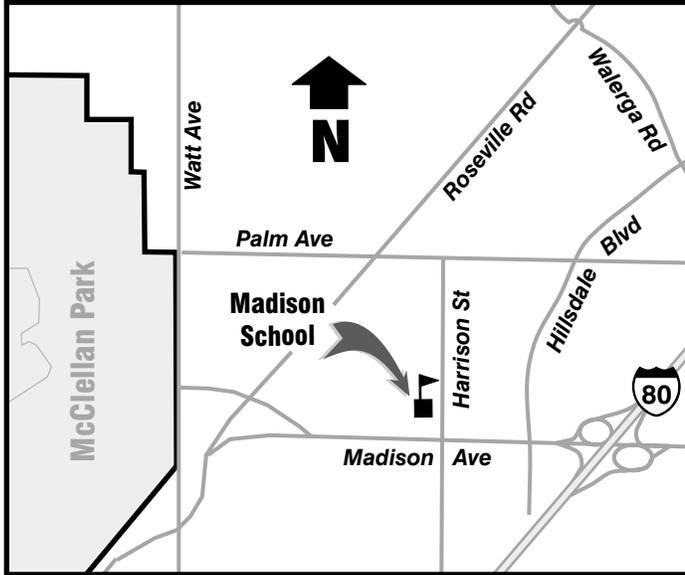
*Approximately 28 percent of the disposal pit has been excavated to date. Note the smaller drum inventory tent in the background.*



### Soil trucked from McClellan

*Bins of excavated soil with radiological contamination (primarily radium 226) were shipped to licensed disposal facilities in Utah and Idaho. The soil was from Potential Release Location 32, which was thought to be an area where radiological materials were spilled. The next step at PRL 32 is to finalize a plan to conduct a final status survey to confirm that all contamination has been removed. Field work is scheduled for summer 2002.*

# McClellan Environmental Open House



**Thursday June 20, 2002**  
**5:30 - 7:30 p.m.**

**Madison School**  
**5241 Harrison Street**  
**Foothill Farms Area**

You are invited to a posterboard display of McClellan's environmental cleanup program. Highlighted projects will include the groundwater treatment program and soil vapor extraction program. McClellan project managers and regulatory agency representatives will be available to answer questions.

If you would like more information or need special accommodations for the meeting, please contact Dawn Young at (916) 643-1742, ext. 233.

## Environmental Management Remedial Scoreboard

As of April 1, 2002:

**1,082,430**

Pounds of volatile organic compound contamination removed from soil and groundwater.

[www.afbca.hq.af.mil/mcclellanem/](http://www.afbca.hq.af.mil/mcclellanem/)

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 (800) 231-3075

*For More Information  
 about McClellan's Installation  
 Restoration Program, please call:*



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