



PROPOSED PLAN

Former Ramey Air Force Base, Aguadilla, Puerto Rico
Formerly Used Defense Sites Property Number I02PR0879

February 2018

INTRODUCTION

This **Proposed Plan**, presented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps), provides an opportunity for public review and comment on the recommended action for **Landfill 1** and **Suspected Waste Area 2** (please see Figure 1) at the Ramey Air Force Base **Formerly Used Defense Site** located north of the municipality of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rico Ports Authority owns the land and operates the Rafael Hernández Airport where Landfill 1 and Suspected Waste Area 2 are located. This Proposed Plan and associated prior investigations are limited to Landfill 1 and Suspected Waste Area 2. The approximate 5.4-acre Landfill 1 is in an undeveloped area within the airport property, south of the runway. It consists of the former burial area adjacent to a sinkhole, two flight line drainage ditches, and a small hill. The second area within the airport property identified as Suspected Waste Area 2 comprises 11 acres west of Landfill 1. The Ports Authority leases this flat, grassy area to a farmer for grazing cattle and growing crops. (Please see Figure 1.)

The Corps is issuing this document in coordination with the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board to meet statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation. The Proposed Plan provides a brief description of the remedial alternative evaluated for Landfill 1 and Suspected Waste Area 2 and discusses the rationale for supporting the **Preferred Alternative**. The Corps will select the final remedy after reviewing and considering information submitted during the public comment period (see the information box above). The Corps, in coordination with stakeholders, may modify the Preferred Alternative or select another response action based on new information or public comments. Therefore, the public is encouraged to review and comment on the alternative presented in this Proposed Plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

March 6-April 13, 2018

The Corps will accept comments on the **Proposed Plan** during the public comment period. Please submit your comments by emailing to FUDS.PuertoRico@usace.army.mil, calling 800.710.5184 or mailing them to the following address.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
ATTN: PM-M (Wilberto Cubero)
701 San Marco Blvd.
Jacksonville, FL 32207-8175

Comments received by 5:00 pm April 13, 2018, or postmarked by that day will be considered in the selection of the final remedy.

PUBLIC MEETING:

The Corps will present the Proposed Plan at a public meeting on **March 6, 2018 at 6:00 PM**.

Courtyard by Marriott
West Parade/Belt Road
Aguadilla, Puerto Rico 00603

Information Repository:

The project documents that are used to determine the appropriate response action (known collectively as the Administrative Record file) are available for review at the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico Aguadilla Campus Library (Telephone: 787.891.0925).

The Corps is required under the **Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act** to issue this Proposed Plan and seek public comment and participation under Section 300.430(f)(2) of the National Contingency Plan. The Corps conducted the Remedial Investigation from June 2010 to September 2011, and the results of that investigation form the basis of this Proposed Plan. This Proposed Plan summarizes information that can be found in detail in the Remedial Investigation Report (March 2017) and other project documents. The documents are available for review at the reference desk of the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico Aguadilla Campus Library.



Figure 1: Approximate Location of Former Ramey Air Force Base Landfill 1 and Suspected Waste Area 2

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Community members and other interested parties are encouraged to review this Proposed Plan and submit comments. The Corps will consider public comments before selecting and approving any action. The Department of Defense is the lead agency for the Formerly Used Defense Sites program, and the Corps, on behalf of the Army and the Department of Defense, is the executing agent for the Formerly Used Defense Sites program. The Formerly Used Defense Sites program provides the means for environmental restoration of all properties that were formerly owned, leased, or otherwise possessed by the United States and under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Defense. The Corps is responsible for investigating, reporting, and implementing remedial action at the former Ramey Air Force Base. The Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board is the lead regulatory agency for this project. Representatives from the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board reviewed and commented on the Remedial Investigation.

The Remedial Investigation Report is part of the **Administrative Record** file that contains all the documents used in making decisions on remedial actions at the former Ramey Air Force Base. The Administrative Record file is available for review at the reference desk of the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico Aguadilla Campus Library.

This Proposed Plan identifies the remedial alternative and provides the rationale for the Preferred Alternative. The purposes of this Proposed Plan are to:

- Provide general background information about the site.
- Present information about any health or environmental concerns associated with the military's use of the property.
- Describe remedial alternatives considered.
- Identify the Preferred Alternative and explain the reasons for the preference.
- Solicit public review and comment on the alternatives described.
- Provide information on how the public can be involved in the remedy selection process.

The Corps will present the selected alternative in the **Decision Document**, and the Corps' responses to public comments on this Proposed Plan will appear in the "Responsiveness Summary" section of the Decision Document. The flow chart shown in the figure below summarizes the various steps in the development and approval process for the former Ramey Air Force Base Decision Document.

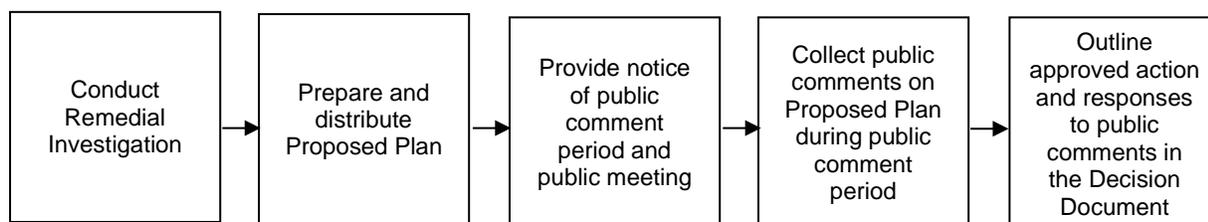


Figure 2: Public Participation Process

SITE BACKGROUND

Site History

The United States government began acquiring property in 1939 to establish what became known as Ramey Air Force Base. Located north of Aguadilla, Ramey Air Force Base grew to encompass approximately 4,357 acres. In addition to runways, hangars and related structures, it also included medical facilities, a golf course, water treatment plants and housing. Initially known as Borinquén Field, it was an important location during World War II, providing a base for reconnaissance flights to defend the United States against German U-boats. It also served as a refueling station and maintenance area for aircraft flying to Europe and Africa. In 1948 it was renamed Ramey Air Force Base and operated under the Strategic Air Command. Ramey played a critical role during the Cold War for reconnaissance missions and refueling squadrons. B-52 bombers arrived at Ramey in the 1950s, and bomber crews continued to be on alert at Ramey until 1972.

By 1973, the Air Force no longer needed the base and deactivated it. The Department of Defense transferred the property to other entities. The Puerto Rico Ports Authority owns the land and operates the Rafael Hernández Airport where Landfill 1 and Suspected Waste Area 2 are located. The deed transferring the property to the Ports Authority specified that the property use is restricted to being an airport, and the Ports Authority is responsible for maintenance of the property.

Previous Investigations

The Corps conducted a number of investigations of Landfill 1 and Suspected Waste Area 2. The Corps completed these studies to evaluate if anything remained from the Department of Defense activities that could affect the environment. These studies included the following.

Inventory Project Report (1993): The Inventory Project Report evaluated the site and determined its eligibility for the Formerly Used Defense Sites program. The Corps identified two areas that the military may have used as landfills and labeled them as Landfill 1 and Suspected Waste Area 2.

Site Investigation (2001): The Corps initiated a Site Investigation in 1996 to determine if there were any impacts to the soil or groundwater associated with the former military landfill and if further investigation of the area was warranted.

Installation-Wide Background Soil Study (2004): The Corps conducted an analysis of the soil across the former Ramey Air Force Base to identify what compounds appeared in the soil away from the landfill area. This approach allowed the Corps to assess the background (or normal) for that area as a means of comparison to the samples collected from the landfill area.

Remedial Investigation

The Corps initiated a Remedial Investigation in 2010 to determine what compounds attributable to the Department of Defense may be present within Landfill 1 and Suspected Waste Area 2. Fieldwork included collecting soil and water samples and digging test pits in the two suspect areas to determine if the Air Force used them as landfills. The investigation also included analyzing photographs from 1961 through 2011 to see how the land was utilized or changed over the years.

The Corps collected 160 samples from the soil, sediment and groundwater, and analyzed them for metals, pesticides, petroleum products, and related materials. The team compared the laboratory results to the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board and the United States Environment Protection Agency's standards, and conducted a risk assessment to analyze the potential risk to people and the environment.

While the analysis detected some metals in the soil within the landfill and in the soil around the landfill, their concentrations were at or below the levels detected in the soil in areas away from the landfill. Some metals occur naturally in the environment, and the amounts vary according to location. The area away from the landfill is known as "background," indicating what amount of metals in the soil is considered normal for this area. There are no impacts to the groundwater associated with Landfill 1 or Suspected Waste Area 2.

In addition to comparing the sample results to what is considered normal (or background) for this area, the Corps also conducted Risk Assessments to determine the potential impact to people and the environment. The Risk Assessments consider the most conservative approach, such as residential standards, in addition to agricultural and recreational uses. These assessments concluded that, based on the scenarios evaluated, there is no risk to people or the environment attributable to the Department of Defense's use of the site.

At Landfill 1, the data indicates it was used as a landfill. The Suspected Waste Area 2 shows no indication of being utilized for anything other than agriculture. Teams dug 30 test pits to look for evidence of a landfill, but they did not find any buried debris. Therefore, the Corps determined no further investigation or action is required for the Suspected Waste Area 2.

For detailed information about Remedial Investigation fieldwork as well as the sampling results, please see the Remedial Investigation report.

Site Characteristics

Landfill 1 is a 5.4-acre undeveloped area south of an aircraft apron used to store inoperable aircraft.

Land Use

The 1978 quitclaim deed transferring title of the property to the Puerto Rico Ports Authority established that the property can only be used for "airport purposes."

Contamination Sources

The potential source of contamination is the material in the landfill, such as construction debris and scrap metal.

Contaminated Media

The Corps tested the soil, sediment, and groundwater and evaluated the results. The sampling data and risk assessments indicate no contamination is present attributable to the Department of Defense.

Scope and Role of Response Action

The overall objective of the investigation was to determine if anything from the military's use of the site is affecting the environment. If so, the Corps would develop a remedial strategy to eliminate the risk to people and the environment. There is no evidence of any contamination attributable to the Department of Defense, so no remedial response action is necessary.

Summary of Site Risks

No military related hazards were identified at the site. The risk assessment, based on the results of the 160 samples collected from soil, sediment and groundwater, concluded that there are no risks to people or the environment attributable to the Department of Defense.

REMEDIAL ACTION OBJECTIVE

Since no remedial action is required, there is no remedial action objective.

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

The Preferred Alternative for this site is No Action. The Corps did not develop or evaluate other alternatives because there is no unacceptable risk to people or the environment attributable to the Department of Defense. This alternative means that the Corps will not take any action, and if the Preferred Alternative of No Action is implemented, the use of the site will continue in its current condition.

EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

There are no risks to people or the environment attributable to the Department of Defense associated with Landfill 1 or Suspected Waste Area 2. For this reason, the only recommended alternative is No Action. Development or evaluation of other alternatives was not required.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

No Action is the Preferred Alternative. It is appropriate because there are no risks to people or the environment attributable to the Department of Defense. Therefore, it satisfies the statutory requirements of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, Section 121(b).

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The Corps is requesting public comments on this Proposed Plan. Comments will be accepted at a public meeting as well as throughout the public comment period. The public meeting is scheduled for March 6, 2018, at 6:00 pm at the Courtyard by Marriott, West Parade/Belt Road, Aguadilla, Puerto Rico 00603. Representatives from the Corps will be present to explain the Proposed Plan, listen to concerns, answer questions, and accept public comments. The Corps will consider comments received during the public meeting and public comment period in the final remedial alternative decision that the Corps will present in the Decision Document. The Corps' responses to public comments will be in the Responsiveness Summary section of the Decision Document.

All reports and project documents are available for review in the Administrative Record file at the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico Aguadilla Campus Library (telephone 787.891.0925).

Contact Information

Telephone: 800.710.5184

Email: FUDS.Florida@usace.army.mil

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
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701 San Marco Blvd.
Jacksonville, FL 32207-8175

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Administrative Record: The documents that form the basis for the selection of a response action compiled and maintained by the lead agency (40 Code of Federal Regulations 800)

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act: This is a federal law that addresses the funding for and remediation of abandoned or uncontrolled hazardous waste sites. This law also establishes criteria for the creation of key documents such as the Remedial Investigation Report, Proposed Plan and Decision Document. (40 Code of Federal Regulations 300)

Decision Document: The documentation of remedial response decisions at Formerly Used Defense Sites. Concurrence on the Decision Document by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or the state regulatory agency is sought, and the Army approves the document.

Formerly Used Defense Sites: A facility or site which was under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Defense and owned by, leased to, or otherwise possessed by the United States at the time of actions leading to contamination by hazardous substances, for which the Secretary of Defense shall carry out all response actions with respect to releases of hazardous substance from that facility or site. (10 United States Code 2701)

Landfill 1: This is a 5.4-acre area within the airport property south of the runway that the Air Force used to dispose of household waste and other debris.

Preferred Alternative: The alternative that, when compared to other alternatives, best meets the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act evaluation criteria and is proposed for implementation at a site.

Proposed Plan: This is a plan that identifies the preferred remedial alternative for a site and is made available to the public for comment.

Remedial Investigation: A Remedial Investigation is a process undertaken by the lead agency to determine the nature and extent of the problem presented by the potential release associated with the military's activities. The investigation emphasizes data collection and site characterization and is generally performed concurrently and in an interactive fashion with the Feasibility Study. It includes sampling and monitoring, as necessary, and gathering sufficient information to determine the necessity for remedial action and to support the evaluation of remedial alternatives. (40 Code of Federal Regulations 300)

Suspected Waste Area 2: This 11-acre area is within the airport property, south of the runway and west of Landfill 1. Documents indicated the Air Force may have utilized the area for debris disposal, but Corps investigations showed no evidence of buried debris in this area.

REFERENCES

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "Inventory Project Report." June 24, 1993

Ecology and Environment, Inc. *Site Investigation for Landfill Areas 1 and 2, Volumes 1 and 2*. March 2001.

Shaw Environmental, Inc. *Installation-Wide Background Soil Study*. April 2004.

CB&I Federal Services LLC. *Remedial Investigation Report Ramey Landfill Area 1 and Suspected Waste Area 2*. March 2017.