

Fact Sheet:

Review of the 2003 Ranges 43-48 Prescribed Burn at the Former Fort Ord

May 2004

U.S. Department of the Army

Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Office

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In October 2003, a prescribed burn was conducted at the Ranges 43-48 Munitions Response Site (MRS) within the former Fort Ord Impact Area. The prescribed burn escaped and burned approximately 1,000 acre more areas within the Impact Area. The fire burned a total of 1,470 acres and generated much more smoke than originally planned.

In 2002, the Army, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) decided that an interim action was needed to remove explosive hazards associated with unexploded ordnance at Ranges 43-48. Dense chaparral vegetation prevented ordnance removal crews from safely cleaning up unexploded ordnance. As part of the interim action, prescribed burning was selected as the method to clear the vegetation. The prescribed burn was conducted on October 24, 2003. The burn was completed on October 31, 2003. Surface removal of unexploded ordnance at Ranges 43-48 began shortly after the burn and now is complete. The cleanup to depth of unexploded ordnance in the Ranges 43-48 site is ongoing and is expected to continue into 2005.

The escaped fire exposed numerous unexploded munitions on the ground in the additional 1,000 acres that burned. Because there was a likelihood of someone trespassing and encountering unexploded ordnance, the Army immediately provided 24-hour security around the entire Impact Area. The Army also conducted a cleanup of ordnance on the surface in this approximately 1,000 acre area as a "Time Critical" action (see *Action Memorandum Time Critical Removal Action (Surface Removal) Watkins Gate Burn Area Former Fort Ord, Monterey County, CA*, February 5, 2004, Administrative Record¹ #OE-0475). The need for further cleanup in this area will be reviewed through the Munitions Response Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (MR RI/FS) process that is in progress at the former Fort Ord.

The following table lists reports that document the events and activities that occurred as part of the Ranges 43-48 prescribed burn. These reports are available for public review at the following locations:

- Fort Ord Administrative Record (AR), Bldg. 4463 Gigling Road, Ord Military Community 831-393-9186,
- California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB) library, Bldg. 12, Third Street, Seaside 831-582-3733, and
- The Administrative Record online search at <http://www.fortordcleanup.com/adminrec/arsearch.asp>

Administrative Record Number	CSUMB Tracking Number	Document Title	Issue Date	Public Review Period
OE-0482	OE-0175	Draft MRS-Ranges 43-48 Prescribed Burn After Action Report, Military Munitions Response Program	April 6, 2004	Closed
OE-0481	OE-0178	Draft Ranges 43-48 Prescribed Burn Air Monitoring Report, Former Fort Ord, California	March 19, 2004	Closed
OE-0483	OE-0176	Draft Final After-Action Report: Fort Ord 2003 Voluntary Relocation Program	April 6, 2004	Open till May 12, 2004
OE-0484	OE-0177	Draft Summary After Action Report: Ranges 43-48 Prescribed Burn, Former Fort Ord, California	April 23, 2004	Open till May 26, 2004

¹ The Administrative Record is a file that contains all the reports, studies and other site-related documents that are related to cleanup decisions at the Former Fort Ord. These documents are available to the public at the Information Repository locations listed above. The Administrative Record contains all the documents; other sites contain some.

Report Summaries

Draft Ranges 43-48 Prescribed Burn After Action Report, former Fort Ord (Parsons, 2004) documents Fire Stop's activities related to burn operations. Fire Stop is the contractor that the Army hired to conduct the prescribed burn. This report includes an evaluation of the burn in terms of the goals of the prescribed burn project. The document includes Fire Stop's report of the cause of the escaped fire. It concluded that either burning pieces of vegetation or hot ordnance fragments fell into vegetation that was pre-treated with fire retardant and a water/foam mixture. These embers ignited the pre-treated brush and spread beyond the control line. The report states that most of the smoke plume traveled to high altitudes out towards Monterey Bay. However, low-lying smoke was also present. Ground-level smoke was caused by the following conditions: the expanded size of the burn, the longer duration of the burn, and the fire burning at cooler temperatures as it was extinguished. The 30-day public review period for this report ended on May 6, 2004.

Draft Ranges 43-48 Prescribed Burn Air Monitoring Report, Former Fort Ord, California (MACTEC, 2004) describes the results of the Ranges 43-48 prescribed burn air monitoring program. The Army coordinated with the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (Air District) and U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM) to monitor air at 15 locations in and around the former Fort Ord. The Air District operated seven of the monitoring stations and MACTEC, the Army's contractor, operated eight. USACHPPM analyzed samples for explosives-related compounds (energetics). Chemicals related to detonations of unexploded ordnance during the fire were not observed at any of the sampling locations. At several of the monitoring locations, particulate matter was recorded at levels above the California Ambient Air Quality Standard (based on sampling over 24-hour periods). Elevated particulate matter levels were mostly a result of the additional acres burned. The 30-day public review period for this report ended on April 23, 2004.

Draft Final After-Action Report, Fort Ord 2003 Voluntary Relocation Program (Creighton & Creighton, 2004) documents 2002-2003 relocation program activities. Topics discussed in this report include the number of people registered for relocation, how the community was notified about the opportunity to relocate during the Ranges 43-48 prescribed burn, and the cost of relocation reimbursements. **The 30-day public review period for this report ends on May 12, 2004.**

Draft Summary After Action Report: Ranges 43-48 Prescribed Burn, Former Fort Ord, California (Army, 2004) summarizes the key findings of the reports listed above, and documents other activities related to the prescribed burn. Related activities discussed in the report include coordination with air quality and fire agencies; operation of the prescribed burn hotline and the (www.fortordcleanup.com) website; air quality-related complaints; a summary of public comments received throughout October and November of 2003; and responses to those comments. This report includes an overall evaluation of the Ranges 43-48 prescribed burn and the Army's recommendations for future burns at the former Fort Ord. **The 30-day public review period for this report ends on May 26, 2004.**

Please mail your comments regarding these reports to:

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