

SMART Team Principals Meeting

15 April 2004 1330 PDT

Stilwell Community Center, Ord Military Community

Facilitated by Mr. Dick Wright (Mitretech for DA BRAC)

Agenda

1330-1500 Presentation to the panel

1500-1630 Public comments

Meeting minutes

Mr. Wright began the meeting with a welcome and introduced the principals at the panel as COL Jeffrey Cairns, Garrison Commander of the Presidio of Monterey; COL Douglas Baker, Chief, Department of the Army Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Office; Mr. Raymond Fatz, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Environment, Safety and Occupational Health); Ms. Dorothy Rice, Deputy Director, Site Mitigation and Brownfields Reuse Program, California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC); Mr. Keith Takata, Director, Superfund Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region IX; and Ms. Catherine Witherspoon, Executive Director, California Air Resources Board.

A slide presentation was made on the topics of property transfer status, munitions response (MR) remedial investigation/feasibility study (RI/FS) update, 2003 prescribed burn review, workplan for SMART, and comments and questions. The slide presentation is available at the Fort Ord Environmental Cleanup Project website www.fortordcleanup.com.

Property transfer-related activities are currently in progress for the early transfer of Del Rey Oaks parcels and lease for the First Tee project, as well as transfers of Track 0 parcels.

The scope and timelines for the currently ongoing Munitions Response Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study were reviewed.

The events associated with the October 2003 prescribed burn at Ranges 43-48 were reviewed. The draft prescribed burn after-action report was issued on April 6, 2004 and is available at www.fortordcleanup.com. Surface clearance of munitions has been completed in all of the 2,200 acres that burned in 2003 (700 acres in Eucalyptus Fire area, approximately 500 acres in Ranges 43-48 and approximately 1,000 acres in Watkins Gate burn area). To date, 12% of the subsurface clearance has been completed in Ranges 43-48. The air was monitored at 15 monitoring locations during the burn. Smoke (particulate matter) was detected but explosives were not detected. Metals were detected at less than the screening levels. The significantly more smoke that was observed was mainly due to the larger size of the burn. The explosive safety distance kept the firefighters away from the burn some distance, and California Department of Forestry (CDF) air tankers were kept at the 1,701 ft distance.

Mr. Takata asked what caused the prescribed burn to escape. Response - The fire jumped the primary control line after two spot fires could not be managed effectively. The fuel break was not wide enough. It is possible that the fire jumped across the control line over or under the fire retardant pre-treated brush. Fuel was being applied to the burn area to ensure the vegetation burned; the approach may need to be reevaluated.

Mr. Takata asked what made it difficult to control the fire once the escape was declared. Response - Explosive concerns made it unsafe for fire fighters to attack the fire from the ground.

Mr. Takata asked if any explosives were detected during the air monitoring conducted during the burn. Response - Explosives and metals related to unexploded ordnance were either not detected or detected at levels below the screening level, except aluminum. But aluminum also exists in the natural environment.

Ms. Rice asked if there were any explosions during the fire. Response - Yes.

Draft summary report would be issued in the next couple of weeks, which would include a summary of public comments received last fall and responses to them. Community Bulletin #7 would be distributed to 50,000 households in the Monterey and Salinas areas in the next several weeks.

Local fire chiefs' agree that prescribed burns at the former Fort Ord are necessary. They prefer controlled burns to uncontrolled fires that could be caused accidentally. However they are concerned that due to the significant explosive safety setback distances they will not be able to directly attack the fire. The chiefs also recommended that fire risks along South Boundary Road be addressed as soon as possible. The possibility of a fire escaping along South Boundary Road may present the greatest risk to surrounding communities. The South Boundary Road also may present the greatest opportunity to an accidental fire as this road is a primary access avenue for Laguna Seca events. The Fire Chiefs also strongly recommended the use of federal fire management format as the standard for planning and managing a controlled burn.

The Army does not plan to conduct a prescribed burn this year. The next burn will occur after July 1, 2005, at munitions response site 16 (approximately 80 acres). Then the next controlled burn could be at Range 30A but as Range 30A is in the impact area, controlling a burn here would present significant challenges. The planning will focus on the ability to control the burn, as it would also limit the amount of smoke that would be generated.

The 2004/ early 2005 SMART Workplan was presented for Principal review, comment and approval.

The Principals then discussed, in some detail, conducting several smaller burns as an alternative approach. This approach would reduce the reliance on weather forecasts, reduce the number of equipment necessary to conduct the burn, reduce the amount of smoke generated each day, and would be easier to control than a larger burn. However, in some areas of the former Fort Ord subdividing the burn polygon was not feasible because unexploded ordnance made it unsafe to widen existing fuel breaks or create additional fuel breaks. This approach is also expected to

provide more opportunities where the weather is appropriate for both fire and smoke management.

Ms. Witherspoon suggested allowing ground ignition if smaller burns were to be conducted. Ms. Witherspoon asked if the 380-acre Range 30A site could be subdivided. Response - Range 30A was included in the Interim Action program because of high explosive items on or near surface. These approaches would be evaluated for future burns but the same approach would not work for every site.

Mr. Takata asked why the Ranges 30A site was included in the Interim Action program if it is in the middle of the Impact Area. Response - The munitions in the site are very sensitive types and attractive.

Ms. Witherspoon stated she wanted to leave the meeting with a feeling that each of the proposals discussed were genuine. COL Baker answered each recommendation would be evaluated individually for each site, as there was no “one-size-fits-all” answer.

Mr. Takata asked if there were other sites that the Army considered not feasible to subdivide. Response - Not currently; however the Impact Area still needs to be further characterized. The mechanical vegetation cutting equipment in use at the former Fort Ord has been armored, providing a better ability to cut fuel breaks.

Ms. Rice stated if hot flying fragments caused the escape, then wider fuel break may not be effective [in controlling burns]. Response - The conditions today are different, now that 2,200 acres along the perimeter of the Impact Area has burned and surface-cleared, providing a good boundary from which to fight fires.

Ms. Witherspoon stated [CARB] has strong preferences for ground ignition to aerial ignition because of [decreased accuracy in applying fuels to desired spots] especially if longer leads were to be used due to the vertical explosive safety setback distance. She suggested limiting the aerial fuel application to the interior of the site to prevent accidentally dropping fuel outside of the burn area.

The next SMART Principals’ meeting will be held after the Army, with agency and public input, has prepared the burn plan for MRS-16.

A public comment session was opened. There was no public comment. The meeting was then closed.

Staff in attendance:

Ms. Kathleen Johnson and Mr. John Chesnutt of EPA; Mr. Rick Moss, Mr. Tony Landis and Mr. Dan Ward of DTSC; Mr. Adrian Nakayama and Mr. Dave Bell of DA BRAC; Mr. Tom Lederle and Ms. Robin Mills of Army BRAC Hampton Field Office; Ms. Gail Youngblood and Ms. Karen Fisbeck of Army BRAC Fort Ord; Mr. George Siller and Mr. Juan Koponen of U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers; and Ms. Amy Taketomo of Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District.