



Edwards Air Force Base  
95th Air Base Wing  
Civil Engineer Directorate  
Environmental Management Division

# Report to **STAKEHOLDERS**

December 2009

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## Environmental Minds want to know

2009 YEAR-IN-REVIEW



# Report to STAKEHOLDERS

*Report to Stakeholders* is a publication of Edwards Air Force Base, 95th Air Base Wing, Civil Engineer Directorate, Environmental Management. Its purpose is to inform and educate the public, base workers and residents about continuing environmental and safety efforts on base. It currently has a circulation of 6,000, including about 2,000 subscribers.

Contents of the *Report to Stakeholders* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Air Force.

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## Students gain valuable career skills

A dozen local high school and college students gained valuable career skills working as summer interns at Environmental Management. The students were taught fundamental office and computer skills, how the government manages records and how to protect information. Environmental Management also introduced the students to future job opportunities and career fields, by providing tours of on-base facilities and presentations by environmental experts.



**LEARNING** — Leah Hunter, left, Meredith Gandy and Phi Nguyen work together during a summer hire briefing.

## Water conservation efforts increase at Edwards

Air Force officials increased water conservation efforts at Edwards by reducing base grass areas by an estimated 40 percent, compared to 20 years ago. Desert landscaping, using plants native to the area, has replaced grass in the front yards of newly constructed base housing and around office buildings. With landscape water accounting for 50 to 70 percent of the average household's water use, the desert landscaping has helped the base significantly decrease water consumption.



**LANDSCAPED YARD** — Newly constructed housing on base features landscaping in the front yards designed to conserve water.

### What's on the cover?

**2009 YEAR-IN-REVIEW** — Find out what took place at Environmental Management this year with *Environmental Minds Want to Know*.



**For all environmental concerns, please call the Environmental Management Customer Service Desk at (661) 277-1401.**

## Stellar year of outreach events and tours with Environmental

2009 was a stellar year when it came to outreach events and tours with Environmental Management. Topping the year was the recordbreaking Earth Day festival in April at the Center of Excellence. The event broke all previous attendance records with an estimated 1,700 people of all ages participating in the many activities offered at the 36 booths and exhibits. The goal of the annual event is to teach people to think about how they can protect the Earth every

day. Many additional outreach events occurred throughout the year, including two Household Hazardous Waste Roundups,

a Pollution Prevention Week exhibit, and two educational assemblies for kindergarten students at Branch Elementary School.

In the category of tours, Environmental Management opened its doors to more than 1,200 students, teachers and base residents in 2009. Attendees visited Piute Ponds, fields of wildflowers, yardangs, a granitic rock outcropping, the Base Environmental Analytical Laboratory and natural and cultural resource displays — all in an effort to educate the public about the importance of taking care of the environment around them.



**TAKING A GANDER** — Tour guides *Alessandra Venuti-Soltis*, left, and *Tech Sgt. Jesse Waite* stop with some tourists to take a look at wildflowers.



**ARCHAEOLOGY** — Archaeologist *Jim Johannemeyer* talks to students about the multifaceted history of Edwards Air Force Base at the Earth Day festival.

## Edwards shines in electronics and hazardous waste

Team Edwards brought home a silver award in the 2009 Federal Electronics Challenge. The annual challenge is sponsored by the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive and the Environmental Protection Agency. After earning the bronze level in 2008, the base pushed for more stringent requirements, and was awarded the silver-level award this year by completing all of the mandatory activities in two of the three electronic equipment life-cycle phases. The challenge honors federal facilities that demonstrate sound environmental stewardship in one to three of the phases in the life cycle of electronics.

Another success story from the year involved the annual Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) hazardous waste inspection. This was the second year in a row that Edwards and the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) had been inspected unannounced and the 16th year in a row that there were no violations of hazardous waste laws, regulations or requirements. The DTSC inspector cited the continued excellent work performed at the Hazardous Waste Support and Consolidation Recycling and Universal Waste facilities, as well as at the accumulation point at AFRL.



**AWARD WINNING** — From left, *Samuel Brown*, *Brian Stone*, *Layi Oyelowo* and federal environmental executive *Joe Cascio* accept the award.



**YOUNG** — *These baby tortoises are being raised in the Head Start pens on base. In the wild, baby desert tortoises often end up as a snack for various predators because of their size and soft shells.*

## Air Force commits to the future of the desert tortoise

The six-year-old Head Start Program continues to give the federally threatened desert tortoise a safe and controlled place to start life on base. For some tortoises, birth and part of their early life takes place at the Edwards Head Start pens — enclosures that combine the natural desert setting with the comfort of a “predator free” zone.

This year, 103 juvenile tortoises were housed in the pens. Biologists released a group of 2-year-olds as a part of ongoing studies. Preliminary results seem promising, according to biologists.

The program goal is to add to the local breeding population. Biologists are working to find the ideal age for releasing juvenile desert tortoises into the wild, while giving them a chance to mature physically in the pens and reduce common predation.

## Artifact storage space triples

Base archaeologists tripled artifact storage space with the installation of an expandable shelving system at the curation facility. At a cost of \$150,000, the shelving system was more cost-effective than using a comparable off-base storage facility at an estimated cost of \$350 per cubic foot. By law, the base is responsible for properly preserving artifacts and associated information of historical significance. Archaeologists predict the shelving system has added as much as 10 years of storage life to the curation facility, which houses historical artifacts, photos, site records, interview tapes and portable educational outreach displays.



**NEW AND IMPROVED**  
*Archaeologist Jim Johannesmeyer looks through a box on one of the newly installed shelves at the curation facility.*



**PLANT SPECIES** — *The slender nemacladus was found during the Plant 42 survey conducted by base biologists.*

## Wildlife survey report and management plan finalized for Plant 42

Edwards Air Force Base biologists finalized a wildlife survey report and management plan for Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale, Calif. Edwards’ biologists were brought in to do the survey because they were familiar with local species—saving the Air Force time and money on the project. The report lists all of the species they found—60 animal and 176 plant species. A few California species of special concern and federal birds of conservation concern were found, including—burrowing owl, California horned lark, loggerhead shrike, tricolored blackbird, yellow-headed blackbird—and one plant, the slender nemacladus. No federally threatened or endangered species, or evidence that they lived on the facility, was found.

## Researchers survey Edwards Air Force Base for large mammals

The first survey to determine the presence and abundance of large, carnivorous mammals on base was finished this past spring. Base biologists will use information gathered from the survey to better manage Edwards' natural resources.

Survey results can help biologists assess which animals could pose a threat to the base's endangered species, and it can reveal information about the health of the local environment. Degradation of the desert ecosystem during the last few hundred years has changed the diversity of animals in the area to the point that the largest, regularly occurring mammal on base is a coyote.

The eight large mammals tracked in the survey were: coyote, desert kit fox, gray fox, feral domestic dog, bobcat, raccoon, badger and ringtail.



**FEEDING** — *This female bobcat rests and feeds her young at an old base housing demolition site.*



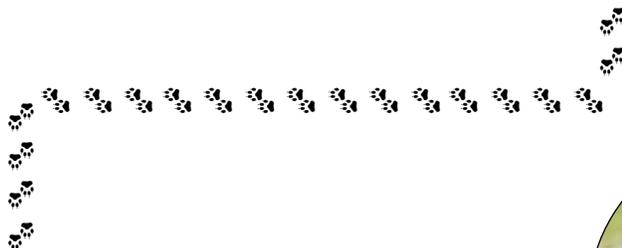
## Graduate students from UC Santa Barbara conduct Piute Ponds study

### **BIRDWATCHING**

*A red-winged blackbird sits on some vegetation at Piute Ponds. The ponds are an important migratory bird stopover along the Pacific Flyway and a variety of birds can be seen there.*



Graduate students from the University of California, Santa Barbara completed a project study with recommendations for putting together a Piute Ponds management plan. The group identified two variables that will affect the future of the ponds: water supply and the budget for managing the ponds. As part of the project, more than 1,000 surveys were sent to local individuals interested in environmental issues at Edwards. Graduate student and conservation chief at Environmental Management, Robert Shirley, said the students were surprised that survey respondents liked the ponds the way they are today.



## Biologists monitor residential areas

The year began with base biologists surveying for coyote activity in residential areas, parks, housing construction sites and unoccupied housing areas — any place on base near residents that could potentially provide shelter for coyotes and their prey. Biologists conducted the surveys during the early morning and late evening hours to determine trends of the predators. The survey data helped biologists also determine any potential issues in residential areas at Edwards. Surveys are currently being conducted on a requested basis.



**PASSING BY** — *A coyote passes by a housing area at Edwards Air Force Base.*



# Restoration team plans to have cleanup systems up and running by 2012

Environmental restoration program managers blazed a path toward the deadline to have base cleanup systems up and running by 2012. By the end of summer, the Air Force, along with state and federal regulators, officially approved final cleanup remedies for two areas at Edwards —South Base and three chemical warfare materiel sites. Then, from September through October, cleanup proposals for the Air Force Research Laboratory arroyos were presented to the public for review and comment. Final cleanup remedies must be chosen for the arroyos and seven other contaminated areas on base by 2012.



*SIGN OFF — 95th Air Base Wing commander Col. Jerry L. Gandy signs the Chemical Warfare Materiel Record of Decision.*



*RAB — Former RAB public co-chair Ruby Messersmith, left, and newly appointed water board remedial project manager Tim Post discuss cleanup issues at a RAB meeting.*

# Restoration Advisory Board gains and loses a few members

This year, the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) gained several new faces and lost a few familiar ones. One of the original RAB members, Ruby Messersmith, retired as public co-chair and North Edwards public representative. Messersmith served on the board since its establishment in 1995. The RAB also said goodbye to Air Force co-chair Col. Nancy Reeves-Flores, NASA Dryden representative Gemma Fregoso and 95th Air Base Wing representative Carolyn Coe. Joining the team is Air Force co-chair Col. Jose Torres, Boron representative Julie English and 412th Test Wing representative Richard Salazar.



# Aircraft tragedies lead to restoration of desert land



Base environmental experts helped Air Force officials restore the environment after two tragic aircraft mishaps occurred outside base property. The mishaps involved an F-22A Raptor that went down northeast of the base in March and a T-38 Talon that crashed 12 miles north of Edwards in May. For each mishap, after the search and rescue and the recovery of the aircraft, hazardous waste specialists tested for, and removed, contaminants, such as jet fuel. Then, restoration experts returned the sites back to their original conditions.



*COLLECTION — Restoration expert Charles Klassette, left, collects soil for sampling, while workers collect debris from the F-22A jet crash that happened this year.*



## Base recycling program capable of recycling polystyrene

The Edwards Air Force Base recycling program found a way to save landfill space and make a little money at the same time. The recycling facility is now home to a polystyrene densifier. This machine reduces expanded polystyrene, or plastic foam commonly used as packing material, into a dense, hard piece of polystyrene. The machine reduces normal plastic foam to a little more than 1 percent of its original size. Plastic foam is 98 percent air and only 2 percent plastic. Base recycling specialists sell the densified plastic foam to an off-base recycler once they accumulate a significant quantity.



**RECYCLE** — Recycled foam sits at the end of an expanded polystyrene densifier at the Edwards Air Force Base recycling facility.



**PILE** — Cylinders sit in a pile ready to be transported and turned into scrap metal.

## HazWaste collects, disposes of 353 air cylinders

In a year full of firsts, the hazardous waste support facility (HWSF) team did not disappoint. In what seemed like a routine effort to dispose of some air cylinders, the team ended up saving the Air Force \$32,485. The unique event involved the Edwards Fire Department needing to dispose of 353 compressed air cylinders. After totaling the cost for routine disposal, hazardous waste specialists found that it was more cost-effective to think outside of the box.

Since the cylinders contained compressed air, the HWSF team was able to drain the cylinders on site. Then the team rendered each cylinder inoperable and sent them out for scrap metal recycling. This not only saved disposal costs; it cycled money back into the base qualified recycling program.

## In-station diagnostics installed at AAFES Car Care Center; detects gasoline leaks quicker



**CLEANING THE AIR** — This clean air separator is located at the base Car Care Center.

The most complicated enhanced vapor recovery system on base became even more sophisticated when in-station diagnostics were installed at the Army Air Force Exchange Services Car Care Center gasoline pumps in February. The new features detect gasoline vapor leaks more quickly and shut off the pumps to prevent expelling gasoline vapors into the air. Customers can help keep the pumps operational and gasoline vapor emissions from escaping into the air by not topping off their vehicles.

## Where to Find More INFORMATION



Published data and documents relating to Environmental Management are available for public review in information repositories at three locations. The current information repositories are located in the cities of Lancaster and Rosamond, as well as Edwards Air Force Base. They are updated when new documents are released.

For questions about information in the repositories, you may contact Gary Hatch, Environmental Public Affairs at (661) 277-1454 or by e-mail at [95abw.pae@edwards.af.mil](mailto:95abw.pae@edwards.af.mil). Here is a list of our current information repositories:

### Edwards Air Force Base Library

5 W. Yeager Blvd.  
Edwards AFB, Calif.  
(661) 275-2665  
Hours of operation: Mon-Thu 9:30 a.m. – 7 p.m.  
Fri 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
Sat-Sun 10:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.

### Kern County Public Library

**Wanda Kirk Branch**  
3611 Rosamond Blvd.  
Rosamond, Calif.  
(661) 256-3236  
Hours of operation: Tue-Thu 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.  
Sat 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

### Los Angeles County Public Library

601 W. Lancaster Blvd.  
Lancaster, Calif.  
(661) 948-5029  
Hours of operation: Mon-Wed 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.  
Thu-Fri 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Sat 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

For general information about Edwards and an electronic version of the latest issue of Report to Stakeholders or other documents of public interest, please visit the following link:  
<http://www.edwards.af.mil/library/environment>.

## Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Information

The RAB is made up of appointed representatives from communities in and around Edwards Air Force Base, regulators from federal and state agencies and base officials. The board's purpose is to provide a forum for two-way communication among base restoration officials, regulators and representatives regarding the cleanup of contamination from past military activities.

The board meets quarterly, rotating meeting locations in communities surrounding the base. The public is welcome to attend. If you have any questions or concerns about the cleanup activities going on at Edwards, you

may contact your community's RAB member or Gary Hatch, Environmental Public Affairs, at (661) 277-1454.

### Next Quarterly Meeting

Date: Feb. 18, 2010  
Time: 5:30 p.m.  
Location: California City, CA  
Venue is to be determined

## RAB Members

### OFF-BASE COMMUNITIES

#### Boron

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#### California City

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#### Lancaster

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#### Mojave

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#### North Edwards

Vacant

#### Rosamond

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ALTERNATE: Leslie Uhazy (661) 256-8209 Home  
[luhazy@avc.edu](mailto:luhazy@avc.edu) (661) 722-6417 Work

### ON-BASE COMMUNITIES

#### Housing

Vacant

#### Main Base Air Base Wing

Vacant

#### Main Base Test Wing

Richard Salazar (661) 275-3275 Work  
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#### NASA Dryden

Vacant

#### North Base

Vacant

#### South Base

Brenda Weems-Hunter (661) 275-0456 Work  
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#### AF Research Laboratory and Propulsion

#### Directorate

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## Remedial Project Managers

### California Department of Toxic Substances

#### Control

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### Edwards AFB

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### Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control

#### Board

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### U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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