Report to
STAKEHOLDERS

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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.

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WHAT'S ON THE COVER?

Base landfill workers found alarming amounts of electronic, hazardous and universal waste in trash bins around facilities. These items are not permitted in trash bins and are to be disposed of properly. See article on page 6.

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Volunteering Opportunities at Environmental Management

Interested in learning new skills? Do you need community service hours? Are you environmentally conscious? The Environmental Management Volunteer Program is looking for volunteers with base access. If you are interested, you may contact the Environmental Management Customer Service Desk at: *95abw.cev.customer.service.helpdesk@edwards.af.mil* for more information. Or you may obtain an application at *https://bsx.edwards.af.mil*, after clicking on "Edwards Air Force Base - Environmental Management," and then "Volunteering Opportunities at EM."

Environmental Quality Program Sampling

COLLECTING SAMPLES

Immediate damage from explosions is often simpler to assess than long-term effects, but to meet regulatory requirements, an environmental team is studying the long-term effects on soil and plant life at the Precision Impact Range Area's Open Burn/Open Detonation (OB/OD) area on base.

The team collects soil and plant samples each year and analyzes them to look for explosive residue material, phosphate, polyaromatic hydrocarbons, perchlorate, hexavalent chromium, dioxins and furans, and several metals. "We are looking to see how far out the contamination goes, and how it is affecting the plants, soil and environment," said Josefa Silva, an environmental restoration specialist working on the project.

Sampling Process

1) The environmental team went to the OB/OD area to collect samples of the outer branches of the plant, farthest from the body of the plant and a layer of soil in the sample area. The team pulled samples from 62 areas.

2) At the laboratory, the team pre-processed the samples using liquid nitrogen to freeze-dry the plants and blended them into a powder. The soil samples were sifted and ground. Next, the plant powder and soil was set out to dry for at least 24 hours.

3) Afterward, the materials were divided into equal amounts and placed into vials for testing.

FREEZE DRYING

SETTING POWDER TO DRY

RTS

Ephemeral ponds provide new worlds for biologists at Edwards Air Force Base

Astronauts can see Edwards Air Force Base's dry lakes from orbit. Both astronauts and pilots report using the dry lakes as navigational aids when they land at Edwards. These huge dry lakes are easy to find. At the same time, Edwards is home to thousands of much smaller water features called ephemeral ponds — some not much bigger than a yard wide and others hundreds of feet wide. At one time, these ponds were much more common throughout California. Scientists estimate that 80 percent of California's ephemeral ponds have been lost because of human activities. They are considered fragile ecosystems.

Ephemeral ponds are able to hold water from a few days up to several months, depending on the weather conditions and the size of the ponds. The clay soils beneath many of these ponds prevent water from percolating into the ground, which creates the standing water.

CATCH ANYTHING?
A team of biologists surveying ephemeral ponds at Edwards discovered a new shrimp in town: the Colorado fairy shrimp. This is the first time this species has been found on base.

According to Environmental Management Natural Resources specialist Wanda Deal, each of these ponds is a world all to itself with a unique mix of plants and animals. "Even a few inches of water in a pond make it possible for freshwater shrimp and other species to live there," Deal said.

Biologists surveying 57 of these ephemeral ponds recently found one pond with a species never before discovered at Edwards — the Colorado fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta coloradensis*). Colorado fairy shrimp are more common in Great Basin ephemeral ponds and lakes.

Deal said the fairy shrimp provide an important food source for migrating birds. Shorebirds like the American avocet, black-necked stilts, sandpipers, gulls and egrets depend on the protein from freshwater shrimp to complete their long migrations between their winter and summer homes.

Unlike the birds, not all ephemeral pond species show up each year; rain and snowfall determine which ones do. Water temperature and chemistry, as well as how long the water remains, determine which species thrive in each pond. "Some species require high water temperatures for specific numbers of days and won't hatch out until those days at the right temperatures have occurred, even if that takes decades to reach," she said. "This type of habitat requirement makes it difficult to know if you have discovered all the freshwater shrimp species that may be here."

Colorado fairy shrimp are not brine shrimp. None of Edwards' ponds are saline like Badwater in Death Valley. Some ponds are more alkaline than others and base biologists have found some differences in the chemistry among some of the ponds.

The plants and animals that live in the ponds have adapted to a cycle of brief periods of activity when water appears with long dry periods in between. "Some cysts [eggs] laid by the animals that live in the ponds can survive for decades, if not centuries," Deal said. Females lay thousands of cysts after mating. Not every cyst hatches every year, ensuring the species will survive if the animals that do hatch do not live long enough to mate and lay more cysts.

Even if the top couple of inches of a pond are clear, there's a lot going on in the mud below. "The water liquefies the clay," Deal said. "There can be up to eight inches of liquefied clay at the bottom of a pond." The liquefied clay provides some protection for the ponds' inhabitants from predators. After they lay their cysts, the dry clay provides protection from the harsh desert elements.

An additional layer of protection comes from a biotic crust that forms while the clay is drying. It is composed of algae, bacteria, and sometimes fungi (known as soil microflora) that grab onto soil particles and form a net across the pond's drying surface. When it is dry, this crust helps the clay surface keep from becoming airborne during high winds.

This crust exists in all desert soils, in different forms depending on the soil microflora. That is why high winds don't pick up as much dust and sand particles from undisturbed desert soil as from a graded patch of ground.

However, this crust is fragile when dry. Driving over it — even walking on it — breaks the crust up, crushes cysts and makes the clay more likely to become airborne during the next big wind storm. "If the damage is small and narrow, a footstep or one bicycle tire track, it should repair itself the next time it gets wet,"

See SHRIMP, page 5

Environmental orchestra: seamless teamwork produces an earthy symphony

Anyone who has watched an orchestra perform knows it takes many accomplished musicians to produce a unified sound. Orchestras contain separate sections for strings, brass, woodwinds and percussion. But, the result is a melodious blend of instruments. Like a finely tuned orchestra, the different sections of Environmental Management work together to blend the Air Force mission and protection of the environment.

"Environmental Management's job is to enable the customer to accomplish their mission with a minimum cost and delay caused by environmental regulations," said Edwards Air Force Base environmental chief Robert Wood. "Environmental Management is most successful when no one notices what we do. If we have done our job, air and waste permits are already in place, handling processes for hazardous materials and waste are already approved, natural and cultural resources have been identified and removed from the customer's path, environmental assessments have been prepared, and the land under the customer's project is clean."

Making up the first section of the orchestra are the environmental resource specialists, or as they are more commonly known, the zone specialists. Each zone specialist acts as an on-site consultant between base organizations and Environmental Management. The zone specialists advise base organizations on how to complete their mission in an environmentally sound way.

Michael Hanna, a zone specialist for the flightline area, explained his role. "I'm not, for example, an air quality or hazardous waste specialist. But, if a customer needs specialized information, I know who to contact or I can place that customer in touch with an expert to help them handle their issue," he said. "I see the other sections of Environmental Management as a resource."

Hanna works at one of seven zones on base. Each zone contains numerous sites that are subject to regulatory inspections. The specialists' walk-throughs, daily interaction with customers and internal inspections help the base maintain a better level of compliance.

"I'm also cognizant of new items on the flightline that other environmental sections need to know about," Hanna said. "I recently learned of a new piece of equipment on the flightline, and worked with an air quality specialist gathering information so she could make sure it was meeting air quality requirements."

Like the zone specialists, the Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP) team relies on other environmental departments to ensure base projects move forward. Before construction or a flight program starts on base, several environmental factors must be considered. The EIAP team acts as a hub to ensure the proper reviews are completed and coordinate that effort.

"The type of project determines which departments need to approve the requi-

site forms," said Verlyn Newby, a former EIAP specialist. "Each project needs to be analyzed for certain environmental compliancy and regulatory issues. For instance, we consulted with the biologists about a drop that was to occur in the Precision Impact Range Area. And a recent sewer request had to be reviewed by several departments, including toxics, wastewater, restoration, natural and cultural."

According to Wood, Environmental Management relies on other base organizations for a successful EIAP process as well. "Bioenvironmental Engineering, Safety, Legal Office, Fire Department and a host of other disciplines work together with Environmental Management to make certain that all of the customer's regulatory requirements are addressed," he said. "This is the true value that EIAP provides. It would be foolish if environmental issues were addressed but the customer could not proceed because health, safety or fire protection issues had not been considered."

In addition to addressing health and safety concerns, EIAP is in place to ensure that base projects proceed without interruption.

"Violations of environmental regulations have the potential to delay and possibly shut down a base project," said biologist Misty Hailstone.

"In addition, violations of environmental regulations have the potential to possibly shut down the mission of the AFFTC [Air Force Flight Test Center]," said environmental quality chief Herb Roraback.

"Working on a federal facility does not exempt us from obeying laws and regulations," Hailstone said. "On the contrary, we are required to know and understand the rules and regulations that must be followed so that we can help to make sure the base stays in compliance with these laws."

One area of compliance that has been ongoing since 1990 is the base cleanup program. Under the *Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980*, Edwards must investigate, characterize, monitor, and clean up contamination in soil and groundwater resulting from past military activities. The restoration data is used to track the migration of contamination plumes or the effectiveness of treatability studies. Providing a centralized database to hold all of this information is the Geographic Information System (GIS). Access to this wealth of information is a mouse click away.

"Users can access WebMap to immediately find the information they are looking for," said Julio Barrios, a GIS analyst. "The database contains information on underground tanks, contamination plumes, natural and cultural resources. There are about 600 official layers."

Barrios said they can customize interfaces for different parts of Environmental Management. "We've designed unique WebMap interfaces for certain departments — like EIAP — so that they only need to call up an area and they will find all the environmental factors related to that area," he said. "It makes their process easier and more efficient."

Wood intends to extend environmental efficiency into the future by always looking ahead. "Environmental Management keeps the base in compliance with current laws and regulations, but its greater value to the Air Force is anticipating future regulations and preparing the permits, plans, training and programming for new equipment needed to comply with new regulations," he said. "It is not uncommon for a permit approval process to cost a million dollars and take three years to accomplish. Planning for future missions and future requirements is a lot like composing a new symphony; parts have to be written for each instrument and the musician must practice before the music can be heard."

RTS

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> **Robert Wood**
> **Chief**
> **Environmental Management**

SHRIMP

From page 3

Deal said. "That's why it is important that people should avoid driving on the clay pans and lakebeds as much as possible."

During the survey, biologists used established paths, roads and also walked to get to the five different parts of the base where they visited the ponds. Many of the ponds surveyed were close to the edges of the large dry lakes. However, several were miles away from the lakes, including several in the southeast corner of the Precision Impact Range Area and the northwest corner of the base. Pool 68, the pond with the Colorado fairy shrimp, was in this corner, north of Red Hill. It was a clear pond, with several inches of very clear water at the top.

The survey biologists visited the ponds in February and March 2009 to collect samples while the ponds still had water. They used nets to collect the animals and took water samples, as well. They returned in May 2009 to collect samples of the dry clay using small garden spades to collect one-fourth to one-half a cup of clay from each pond. They discovered a high number of Colorado fairy shrimp in Pool 68, along with four other species. They were also able to hatch cysts in the laboratory.

The biologists are finalizing their report now. Deal said the Air Force will be funding another study this year to look at more ephemeral ponds. "Until we survey, we have no way of knowing whether Edwards is home to any threatened or endangered species in the ephemeral ponds," she said. The 2009 study was the third freshwater shrimp study conducted at Edwards since 1993. Each study has found a new species to add to the base's inventory.

RTS

Improper disposal around base facilities causes problems

Facility managers should know the drill. Electronic, hazardous and universal waste must be kept out of the trash, but recent finds by landfill workers show this is sometimes not the case.

Last month, workers found nearly a ton of government-owned electronics, hazardous and universal waste dumped in the large metal trash bins located near some base facilities.

The landfill team removed these items from the trash and coordinated with the hazardous waste team to have the items disposed of properly.

"My guess is the people doing this didn't know who to call to find out how to dispose of these items, and so they dumped them in the garbage," said Kathryn Curtis, hazardous materials/waste program manager at Environmental Management. "They might have been cleaning out a building, storage cabinet or something like that and thought, 'look at all of this junk' and didn't know what else to do with it."

But ignorance won't wipe away a notice of violation, which could have been given on the spot if a regulatory agency representative had dropped in for a no-notice inspection. The NOV could have also been accompanied by a fine of up to $25,000 per violation per day.

In addition, state scientists say hazardous, universal and electronic waste products leak toxic substances — mostly metals — into a typical landfill.

Common items falling under hazardous, universal or electronic waste include, but are not limited to: televisions, computers, monitors, fluorescent lights, copy machines, toner cartridges, paint, cleaners, gas cans, aerosols and batteries. The landfill team found all of these items in the metal trash bins.

The estimated 2,000 facility managers around the base should know what to do with these types of items from their annual facility manager training courses or the monthly new facility manager briefings, but attendance at these training sessions has dropped recently. Fewer than 100 facility managers attended the annual training session in March.

"Environmental Management will be providing additional training and increase communication," Curtis said. "We're also having the environmental resource specialists, or zone representatives, conduct periodic inspections of trash bins around facilities. If they find something, they will alert the shop owner and make sure things are being disposed of properly.

"The big thing we want to get across is that if someone doesn't know how to dispose of something, there's always somebody who can answer their question," Curtis said, "and if we can't give them an answer, we'll do some research and figure out what needs to happen."

Basically, all hazardous waste, unwanted or expired hazardous materials, and universal and electronic waste need to be taken to the Hazardous Waste Support Facility or the Consolidation, Recycling and Universal Waste Facility, both located at Building 4904, for proper disposal.

The exception is government-owned electronic equipment, whether working or nonworking, which must be turned in through the 95th Communications Group Turn-in Center. Employees wanting to get rid of government-owned electronic equipment must submit a ticket to schedule a pickup. Along with the usual trouble ticket information, the user can list the condition and quantity of equipment they would like to have picked up.

Contractor-owned electronic equipment should be taken to the CRUW.

For more information, facility managers should attend the monthly facility manager meetings scheduled on the third Wednesday of each month at the Civil Engineer Directorate, Bldg. 3500, in the main conference room from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Brochures on disposal practices for hazardous, universal and electronic waste for base residents can be picked up at the Base Housing Office and a brochure oriented for facility disposal practices is in development. The latter will be given out at future training sessions and sent to facility managers around the base in an effort to eliminate these wastes from finding their way into the trash bins or the landfill.

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When in doubt, just ask

Here's a list of contacts available to answer questions about the disposal of hazardous materials or waste, universal waste, electronic waste and government-owned electronic equipment:

1) HWSF/CRUW
661-277-3681
Building 4904
Drop-off center for hazardous waste, universal waste, electronic waste, and hazardous materials that can be reused (however, no government-owned electronic equipment can be received at this location).

2) 95th Communications Group Turn -in Center
661-277-3107
Government-owned electronic equipment must be turned in through this center. Go to www.af.mil and follow this path, "MAJCOM: Air Force Materiel Command: Air Force Flight Test Center: 95 Air Base Wing: 95th Communications Group: Client Services Center: CG Equipment Turn-in Center (or type in *https://remedyit.edwards.af.mil/rsubmit.asp?formtype=ExIT_Turnin*)

3) Environmental Management
661-277-1401
Building 2650A
For more information about hazardous, universal and electronic waste procedures.

4) Margaret Larsen, Facility Manager Facilitator
661-277-2420
For more information about the facility manager briefings.

Section chief turns compliance challenges into opportunities

Five years into his Air Force career, then Tech. Sgt. Herb Roraback transferred to Edwards Air Force Base to work as a crew chief on T-38s. That was in 1985. He hasn't left since.

During his 25 years at Edwards, Roraback has worked as active-duty military, a contractor and an Air Force civilian employee at Environmental Management. His varied experience in these positions has helped him progress to his current position as chief of Environmental Quality with a 2009 budget of $8.8 million. He supervises eight government employees, and works with 44 on-site contractor support staff and many off-site contracts.

Going back to his beginnings, Roraback was born and raised in Carmichael, Calif., east of Sacramento. He graduated from Del Campo High School in Fair Oaks, Calif. and joined the Air Force in 1980. He worked as a jet engine mechanic for several years before becoming a crew chief. In 1990, he cross-trained into industrial hygiene and worked in Bioenvironmental Engineering for a time.

In 1994, Roraback left the Air Force and went to work for a contractor organization supporting the Edwards Environmental Management office, where he worked in air quality. There he conducted compliance inspections on air pollution sources, like gas-powered generators used to service aircraft on the Edwards flightline. He also prepared permit applications that Edwards submitted to the local air quality regulators for approval and prepared emission inventories, reports that account for pollutants discharged into the air.

In this position, one of Roraback's biggest challenges was assisting the Air Force in coming into compliance with the then-new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rules called the Aerospace National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants, or NESHAP.

"Aerospace is Edwards' business — the Aerospace NESHAP had a huge potential impact for the base," Roraback said. "We put together a road show and trained base organizations to prepare for it."

At that same time, he completed his bachelor's degree in industrial technology through Southern Illinois University's engineering outreach program at Edwards in 1999. During his time as a contractor, Roraback progressed from an air quality consultant into a management position.

***MEETINGS** — Herb Roraback leads his section meeting. As the compliance chief, he manages eight government employees, who oversee programs or processes to keep the base in compliance with various federal, state and local regulations.*

In 2005, Roraback left the contractor world to become Environmental Management's air program manager. "Going to work as an Air Force civilian was a big shift for me," he said. "I was now responsible for overall air quality program management rather than individual tasks."

After two years, Environmental Management's chief Robert Wood tapped Roraback to fill the Environmental Quality section chief position temporarily. "I always knew we had regulatory requirements for all these media, but I didn't realize how much work it was going to be just to stay on top of changes," he said. "I had to go from one medium to twelve."

In 2008, he was permanently assigned as the branch chief.

On the most basic level, all three of Environmental Management's branches — Restoration, Conservation and Environmental Quality – exist to help the Air Force comply with federal, state, Air Force and local environmental rules and regulations. However, the Environmental Quality Branch deals with areas that are directly impacted by Air Force operations: air quality, water quality, solid waste, storage tanks, hazardous waste, hazardous materials, asbestos, lead, pollution prevention, recycling and the Environmental Management System.

Roraback credits his staff with Edwards' continued success in environmental quality. "I've got good staff," he said. "They excel in planning, programming, budgeting and execution."

Budgeting is very important from the government side. "Project managers need to make sure their programs get enough money to meet mandated requirements, and ours are very successful at it," he said. "The economic downturn has not affected compliance requirements."

"And, even with greater requirements, money is getting tighter," Roraback said. "It's logical that if you take away money, it opens us up for more NOVs."

The acronym NOVs stands for notices of violation. If a regulatory agency sends an inspector and they find a severe violation of any environmental laws or rules, Edwards gets an NOV. If the violation is major, or a minor one that is not corrected quickly, the base can be fined. Depending on the severity of the violation, government project managers can be held responsible and may have to pay fines or go to jail.

"The way to deal with this problem of less money and more requirements is to create efficiencies: work smarter, not harder," Roraback said.

An example of Environmental Management's success in finding efficiencies is reduced hazardous waste disposal costs.

"We've pursued a reimbursable process," he said. "We can now charge our clients — base associates and tenants — for their hazardous waste disposal costs."

Environmental Management's hazardous waste disposal costs have dropped from $500,000 to $200,000 in one year. "Everyone is pretty much paying their own way — Environmental Management is not footing the bill for everyone," he said.

But his greatest challenge is still change. "Compliance is everchanging," he said. "Keeping up, staying on top of all the new requirements is my biggest challenge."

Roraback has spent his 25 years at Edwards with his wife of 27 years, Renee. They live in California City and have two children. When he's not working on compliance issues, Roraback enjoys golf, TV sports and gardening.

RTS

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*. 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 or other documents of public interest, you may visit the following link: *www.edwards.af.mil/library/environment*.

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Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Information

The RAB is made up of elected 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 the community 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: August 19, 2010
Time: 5:30 p.m.
Location: Rosamond, Calif.
Venue to be determined

RAB Members

OFF-BASE COMMUNITIES

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Vacant

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AF Research Laboratory and Propulsion Directorate
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