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# Report to **STAKEHOLDERS**

Volume 16 No. 4

## A change of plan for Site 29

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## Bruce Davies represents North Edwards on RAB

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# Air Force changes course on landfill efforts at Site 29

**A** change in the plan for cleaning up a site that helped put Edwards Air Force Base on the Environmental Protection Agency's National Priorities List will save the Air Force \$15 million while returning the area to unrestricted use.

After removing surface debris in 2008 and 2009, workers took a closer look at Site 29, a former 38-acre landfill. That investigation led restoration officials at Edwards to rethink the approach to cleaning it up. "We removed 150,000 tons of surface debris and didn't find as much subsurface waste as we anticipated," said Rebecca Hobbs, program manager for the area.

Engineers originally estimated they'd find 490,000 cubic yards of buried waste at the landfill that was used by local residents from the 1930s until the 1970s. Surveys performed after the surface concrete, asphalt, wood, metal and other materials were removed and recycled revealed only 21,700 cubic yards of waste left in the ground. "We used geophysics and ground penetrating radar to evaluate the subsurface at the site," Hobbs said. "There wasn't nearly as much debris there as we had thought."

The discoveries led the Air Force to rethink their approach for the site. Originally, plans were approved to contain the

waste in place, move surface soil and install concrete storm-water flow diversion channels, implement land use controls and monitor it forever. There were concerns about the presence of buried unexploded ordnance and hazardous waste. Basically, the area would have been fenced and future use would have been restricted. That solution would have cost approximately \$18 million over the life of the project.

The new plan, called a clean closure, will remove all the waste and recycle as much of it as possible. Clean closure will cost the Air Force approximately \$3 million and allow almost any type of future use. "We believe clean closure is more beneficial to the environment and much more cost effective," Hobbs said.

The originally approved cleanup plan that included Site 29, called a Record of Decision, was approved in 2009 by the EPA and state regulatory agencies. Making such a large change in the plan required new regulatory and public reviews. The new Proposed Plan for Site 29 was available for public review in January and February 2011. The base held two public availability sessions and the document was available for viewing on the Internet.

Hobbs estimates the site can be clean closed by the end of 2014.



**INACTIVE LANDFILL** — In 2008 and 2009, Air Force officials removed surface debris from Site 29. In total, 142,000 tons of concrete, 6,324 tons of asphalt, 688 tons of wood, 192 tons of metal and 314 tons of other materials (bricks, rubber, and plastic) were removed. Officials now want to address the subsurface waste at the site.

# Past and Future of Site 29

Site 29 is located on the southwestern edge of Rogers Dry Lake, a little more than 2 miles south of the Birk Flight Test Facility at South Base.

It consists of two parts. The first part, a 4-acre area on the west side of the site, was used as a landfill by area civilians in the 1930s. In the mid-1950s, the Air Force started a 34-acre landfill across the road from, and to the east of, the first landfill. Household and industrial waste was dumped in the landfill until the 1970s. The dumping method used at this site was called “cut and cover” in which trenches were dug to contain the waste and then covered over with a layer of soil each day.

Nearby facilities complemented the landfill. The military built a sewage treatment plant and several evaporation ponds nearby. None are in use any longer.

In 1985, demolition rubble from the former Muroc Army Airfield site at South Base was dumped across 20 acres at the eastern landfill. This rubble consisted mostly of concrete and asphalt but included some asbestos-containing material as well.

In the 1990s, the Restoration staff at Edwards took soil samples, soil gas samples, and installed 10 groundwater monitoring wells. Groundwater samples from these wells are analyzed regularly. Some samples showed low levels of organic compounds, but none

have been detected above regulatory limits since 2002.

The Air Force removed 660 cubic yards of asbestos-containing material and installed an 8-foot chain link fence around the site in 1998. The purpose of the fence was to protect people and keep additional waste from being dumped at the site.

The original plan for cleanup at Site 29 included the removal of surface debris. This was done in 2008 and 2009 when 142,785 tons of concrete, 6,324 tons of asphalt, 688 tons of wood, 192 tons of metal, and 314 tons of other material were removed. No additional asbestos-containing material, household hazardous waste, stained soil, or unidentified containers were found during removal of the debris. The concrete, asphalt and metal were recycled. “We tried to compost the wood. But after years of exposure to the desert climate, it just turned to powder,” said Rebecca Hobbs, who is the program manager for the area.

Hobbs hopes that excavation of the buried portions of the former landfills can begin in 2013 with completion by 2014. As with the surface debris removal, the Air Force will recycle as much material as possible to keep it out of any other landfill.

## National Priorities List

Edwards is on the EPA National Priorities List (NPL). According to the EPA Web site, “the National Priorities List is the list of the worst sites among the known releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants throughout the United States and its territories.” The NPL is better known as Superfund, although the EPA doesn’t fund the cleanup at Edwards.

Because of the proximity of Site 29 to the main drinking water wells in use by the base in the late 1980s, and the assumption that hazardous waste was buried in the landfill, the EPA nominated the base for the NPL in 1989. A year later, Edwards was included on the list.

Later samples of the groundwater and results from digging test pits at Site 29 proved the site did not contain worrisome levels of contamination. “There was a little bit of trichloroethene in groundwater years ago,” said Rebecca Hobbs, program manager, “but testing shows there is nothing above regulatory limits now.”

However, clean closure at Site 29 will not take Edwards off the list. “When they put us on the NPL, it was from fence line to fence line,” Hobbs said. Other base sites currently being investigated, managed or cleaned up will keep Edwards on the list for the foreseeable future.

# Report to STAKEHOLDERS

*Report to Stakeholders* is a publication of Edwards Air Force Base, 95th Air Base Wing, Civil Engineer Division, 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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## WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



A tractor fills a truck with surface debris from Site 29, an abandoned sanitary landfill at South Base, which is located in Operable Unit 2. A change of plan for cleanup will save the Air Force money.

# Bruce Davies invests time as public representative for North Edwards

**N**o movie theatres, no sports bars, no shopping malls. To passersby, North Edwards, Calif., may not offer much by way of entertainment. But for life-long resident Bruce Davies, the small town of fewer than 2,000 people holds adventure around every corner. Davies' appreciation of the desert environment was one reason he volunteered to represent his community on the Edwards Air Force Base (AFB) Restoration Advisory Board (RAB).

The RAB provides an open forum for the exchange of information among members of the public, base restoration officials, and state and federal regulators. People from on- and off-base communities represent their respective community on the board, which meets semiannually to discuss the cleanup progress of the base's past hazardous waste disposals.

Davies first learned about the RAB through Ruby Messersmith, the former North Edwards public representative, and 14-year public co-chair. "I knew that Ruby was part of it, and I'm an environmental-type of person. As a kid I probably did more to destroy the ecosystem, but now I'm trying to make up for being a kid," he said of his decision to join the RAB.

As a kid, Davies remembers collecting desert tortoises from the wild. This was before the animal was listed as a threatened species. "At the time, I didn't know it was a death sentence for them," he said. "I really felt bad. Now when I see them, it's more in respect. I enjoy the environment out here; I like the desert. I think it's beautiful, and it doesn't have to be blooming with wildflowers. I enjoy it year-round."

In fact, Davies likes the desert best when it's not green because "it's easier for me to spot petrified wood." Hunting from an early age, Davies has amassed a sizeable collection of petrified wood, some pieces measuring a few feet in length. "I try to walk a few miles every evening, looking for pieces."

Spending so much time in natural settings has given Davies a unique view on the environment. His stance is to "let nature take care of itself and don't meddle with it." He has seen cases of human encroachment that have made a significant impact on the environment. "I think that we depleted the resources. This environment is so harsh that it's difficult for recovery. I remember when sidewinders were the most common snake out here. But I haven't seen one since I've been back from college," he said.

Davies has lived in North Edwards nearly all his life. After graduating from Boron High School, Davies began working at the borax mine in Boron. He vividly recalls his desire to pursue a different career. "I remember the day I said I'm not going to do this with my life; I'm going back to school," he said. "I was loading 100-pound sacks of borax in 100-degree heat in a boxcar. It was a rare August day with high humidity and I was dripping wet. That was a defining moment in my life."

So, Davies headed to San Diego State University and began an apprenticeship with a certified plumber. One day, while cleaning drains on a rooftop, Davies fell from a two-story building. He survived but decided to keep both feet on the ground. This decision led Davies to become a certified electronics technician.



**REPRESENTATIVE** — Restoration Advisory Board Member Bruce Davies speaks at a public meeting in February. Davies is the North Edwards public representative.

Here he gained experience fixing early-model home computers manufactured by Timex Sinclair.

Although he enjoyed working with electronics, Davies wanted to try his hand at teaching. So he enrolled at Brigham Young University in Utah, majoring in mathematics with a minor in computer science. Armed with his mathematics degree, Davies and his family settled down in North Edwards. During this time, Davies taught science, math and computer science at Boron High School.

When an opportunity came up at a solar energy plant, Davies accepted the challenge of building the company's computer systems from the ground up. "I stayed there for about 10 years doing new installs, working with new IBM systems. It was really interesting," he said.

Davies continued his career in computer systems, transferring

to an almond company in Bakersfield. There, he was responsible for maintaining the computer systems for seven plants that were spread out from Bakersfield to the Bay Area. But life on the road eventually lost its luster. "I was only able to be at home on the weekends," he said. "The kids were growing up faster and, with them being in high school, I didn't want to miss their games."

To stay closer to home, Davies accepted a job with the TYBRIN Corporation doing information technology work at Edwards AFB. Then he was hired by Boeing to do hardware engineering on computer electronics for the F-15 Eagle aircraft. He next became a software engineer for the F-22 Raptor. Currently, he's doing strategic planning for the base's C-17 Globemaster III aircraft. "I organize and schedule different test programs on the platform, making

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I enjoy the environment out here; I like the desert. I think it's beautiful, and it doesn't have to be blooming with wildflowers. I enjoy it year-round.

**Bruce Davies**  
**North Edwards**  
**RAB Representative**

sure the planes are available for each test. Mostly, the test programs involve new technology that may be added to the

aircraft in the future," he said.

Several years ago, he earned a master's degree in finance. While he did not pursue a career in finance, Davies applies his skills as president of the Edgemont Acres Mutual Water Company. He volunteers his own time to help the water supplier oversee finances and overall operations. "I'm doing it for the community," he said of his position.

Davies' personal investment in the North Edwards community can be explained by familial roots. Today, he and his wife of 32 years, his parents, and all but one sibling call North Edwards home. "I pretty much know everyone in the community," Davies said. "And anyone who needs to contact me can find me in the phone book." North Edwards residents can contact Davies with questions or concerns about the base restoration program.



**U.S. EPA** — *Joseph Healy, an EPA regulator, takes some time to address the public at the February RAB meeting.*

## RAB Meeting Highlights

Feb. 17 Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Meeting Highlights, Mojave, Calif.

Changing the Face of RAB Meetings — Ai Duong, base remedial project manager, informed the board that the RAB budget for fiscal year 2011 had been cut by 50 percent. For this reason, the Air Force was forced to reduce the level of support previously provided to the RAB. Mr. Duong introduced Cheryl Herbert, stewardship manager, to explain the Air Force's proposed alternatives for information exchange between the public and those responsible for the cleanup of the base's past hazardous waste disposal practices.

Ms. Herbert explained that the Air Force would only be able to support semiannual, not quarterly, formal meetings. In lieu of the formal meeting time, officials offered other venues for consideration, including: moving RAB meeting locations to the base for working-group sessions, meeting at a restaurant for informal dinner discussions, video conferencing and social media forums.

After discussion among the board members, it was decided that the Air Force would propose changes to the RAB charter and bylaws. The changes would address the reduction of formal meetings from four to two per year, and incorporate Air Force support of a social media Facebook site. The Air Force proposed a working-group session to finalize these changes. The session took place June 16.

### Revamp of the Report To Stakeholders Newsletter

The tightening of belts can be seen across America, and the Air Force budget is no exception. To be better financial and environmental stewards, base officials elected to publish the RTS newsletter bimonthly and move toward electronic distribution. In addition, the newsletter will be reduced to four pages after this issue, and cover topics related exclusively to environmental restoration.

Get your environmental news quickly by signing up for electronic RTS mailings. Send an e-mail to [95abw.rts@edwards.af.mil](mailto:95abw.rts@edwards.af.mil) and you will automatically be added to the distribution list. You can find the latest electronic copy of the newsletter online at [www.edwards.af.mil/library/environment/index.asp](http://www.edwards.af.mil/library/environment/index.asp), under "Edwards Environmental Publications."

# Where to find more INFORMATION



Published data and documents relating to Environmental Management are available for public review at three information repositories. They are updated when new documents are released. 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: Wed 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.  
Fri-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.  
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For questions about information in the repositories, you may contact Gary Hatch, Public Affairs chief of internal operations, at (661) 277-4127 or by e-mail at [95abw.pae@edwards.af.mil](mailto:95abw.pae@edwards.af.mil).

For general information about Edwards or other documents of public interest, you may visit the following link:  
[www.edwards.af.mil/library/environment](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 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. Those who have questions

or concerns about cleanup activities at Edwards may contact any RAB member or Gary Hatch, Public Affairs chief of Current Operations, at (661) 277-4127.

## NEXT MEETING

Will be determined at a later date.

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### ON-BASE COMMUNITIES

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