

1.0 BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Congressional mandate, numerous military bases are undergoing realignment or complete closure with the potential for severe economic impacts on the affected local communities. A five-part program to mitigate economic dislocation and speed economic recovery of communities near military bases scheduled for realignment or closure was announced by President Clinton on July 2, 1993. Rapid redevelopment and job creation are the top goals of this community reinvestment program, commonly referred to as the "Five Point Plan". The program calls for the Federal government to give priority to local economic redevelopment, provide transition and redevelopment assistance to workers and communities, put cleanup on a fast-track, provide transition coordinators at major bases scheduled for closure or substantial realignment, and allocate more funds for economic development planning grants.

The "Fast Track Cleanup Program" is an essential component of the President's Five Point Plan. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Defense (DoD), and the states are charged with creating a working partnership to implement the Fast Track Cleanup Program with the objectives of "quickly identifying clean parcels for early reuse, selecting for appropriate leasing parcels where cleanup is underway, and hastening cleanup."

The following background sections, 1.1 - 1.3, describe key aspects of the Fast Track Cleanup Program as announced by the President in July, 1993. Guidance for EPA implementation of Fast Track, based on over two years of experience, follows.

1.1 Establishing Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Cleanup Teams

Environmental experts from EPA, DoD, and the state, working as a team, will be assigned to BRAC bases **identified by DoD as Fast Track Cleanup locations**, i.e., bases with environmental contamination that may or may not be on the National Priorities List (NPL) where property will be available for transfer to a community. Decision making authority will be placed at the lowest practical level within each organization and members of the team will be empowered to make decisions to expedite the process. The teams will conduct "bottom-up" reviews of the environmental conditions of the base, with the objective of accelerating cleanup while integrating base reuse priorities.

1.2 Making Parcels Available for Reuse

The Fast Track Cleanup Program strives to make parcels available for reuse as quickly as possible, either by transfer of uncontaminated or remediated parcels or lease of contaminated parcels where there is no unacceptable risk to public health and the environment from the planned use of the property. Coordination between the cleanup efforts and reuse efforts is a key factor in making parcels available for reuse. Parcels with potential for reuse should be identified as early in the process as possible and given priority in the cleanup process as appropriate.

1.3 Accelerating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process

DoD is required to apply NEPA during the process of property disposal and reuse. Under NEPA, DoD must define the environmental impact of the proposed reuse, document adverse effects that cannot be avoided, and identify alternatives to the proposed action. The NEPA process and all documents required by NEPA (scoping report, draft Environmental Impact Statement and final Environmental Impact Statement) should be completed within 12 months from the date a community submits its final reuse plan.