

Griffiss Air Force Base

New York

EPA ID#: NY4571924451

EPA REGION 2

Congressional District(s): 23

Oneida

2 miles northeast of Rome

NPL LISTING HISTORY

Proposed Date: 11/1/1984

Final Date: 7/1/1987

Site Description

The Griffiss Air Force Base site, located in Rome, New York, is situated in the Mohawk Valley among the Mohawk River, Six Mile Creek, and the New York State Barge Canal. The base which began operation in 1943, encompasses 3,552 acres and was home to the 416th Combat Support Group under the Air Combat Command until the base was designated for realignment under the Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) in 1993 and 1995. While in operation, various wastes, including solvents and lead from battery acids, were generated from research and development activities in the industrial shops and laboratories. These wastes were disposed in landfills and dry wells located throughout the base and subsequently volatile organic compounds (VOCs) have been detected in groundwater on the base. The area immediately surrounding the base is primarily agricultural, with a few residential areas. The City of Rome is southwest of the base and has a population of 50,000. About 95% of the local population obtains water from the municipal water supply system. The source of this supply is upgradient from the base; however, some private wells are used to irrigate crops. The Town of Floyd, a community of over 300 homes southeast of the base, has received its water from private wells.

SiteResponsibility: This site is being addressed through Federal actions.

Threat and Contaminants

Groundwater, at portions of the base, is contaminated with VOCs. Soil is contaminated with heavy metals including lead, chromium, and barium, as well as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). PCBs and SVOCs have been found in Three Mile and Six Mile Creeks.

Private water wells off base are used for irrigation and drinking water and it was believed that contaminants may accumulate in food crops and pose a health hazard to those who eat them. In addition, people who touch or accidentally ingest the contaminated soil may suffer adverse health effects.

Contamination in the form of leachate from the landfills, discharges from old storm sewers and accidental spills have contributed to contamination of the creeks. Pollutants from these sites may be harmful to wildlife and aquatic populations.

Cleanup Approach

This site is being addressed through either interim remedial actions (namely an Air Force removal action attempting to address the cleanup of the site) or through the CERCLA RI/FS remedial action process. To expedite the cleanup process, several sites have undergone a presumptive remedy approach.

Response Action Status

Immediate Action: As an interim action in 1990, the Air Force began providing bottled water for residents affected by contaminated well water and provided funds to the community to construct an extension of the municipal water supply to replace the contaminated wells. Hook-ups to the water supply extension were available by late 1991 and most residents believed to have been affected availed themselves to these supply extensions. Underground storage tanks and associated soil contamination were removed from the base between 1985 and 1989. Subsequently, a program to remove or replace all tanks on base was initiated and completed. In 1997, Griffiss performed several removals of: PCB contaminated soil/sediment; petroleum contaminated soil; several drywells and sumps used in the disposal of liquid waste; and one small landfill used to house low level radioactive tubes.

Entire Site: Griffiss Air Force Base has conducted a study to determine the extent of contamination to the groundwater,

soil, and the remainder of the base. Thirty-one areas of concern (AOCs) have been identified for investigation, including landfills and drywells. The draft Remedial Investigation (RI) report for these 31 AOCs was submitted in September of 1995 and was reviewed by EPA and NYSDEC. After several discussions, the regulators and the Air Force met and reached an agreement to use a presumptive remedy approach at several sites (landfills) which eliminated the need for an FS and expedited cleanup. Records of decision (RODs) for these sites have been approved and the units have all been capped. In addition, based upon supplemental RI data other sites are now seeking no further action approval based upon future land use and appropriate deed restrictions. Of the 25 RODs issued, 17 sites have approved RODs which indicate no further action provided the land use remains the same and the stipulated deed restrictions are followed. Finally, additional areas of interest (AOIs sites) have also been identified and most of these sites have been evaluated, investigated and determined to require no further work. However, two AOIs have been classified as AOCs, grouped with similar sites and are proceeding to the proposed plan stage.

Site Facts: An Interagency Agreement among the EPA, the State, and Griffiss Air Force Base to clean up the site was signed in June 1990. The public was concerned over contamination of some Floyd wells and, as a result, the Air Force agreed to provide bottled water and to fund replacement. In addition, Griffiss Air Force Base is participating in the Installation Restoration Program, a specially funded program established by the Department of Defense (DOD) in 1978 to identify, investigate, and control the migration of hazardous contaminants at military and other DOD facilities.

Cleanup Progress

Regarding the wells in the town of Floyd which were impacted by contamination from the base, provisions of safe drinking water has eliminated any potential of exposure to hazardous substances in the water. The municipal water distribution system was extended into the area of contaminated wells and was made available to the affected residences.

An EPA funded program to provide sampling and testing of residential wells over a wider area has determined that off-base contamination was not more extensive than previously found in Floyd. This monitoring program was conducted jointly by EPA and NYSDOH to determine if off-base well contamination extended beyond the Floyd area as noted above. Results of a one and one half year test program were negative and indicate that the contamination has been limited. Supplemental investigations of the groundwater at Griffiss have shown no migration of contaminants off-base.

The remaining identified areas of concern on the base have been grouped into non-time critical removal actions to facilitate the determination and initiation of optimum remediations. Field work which commenced in the fall of 1993 has resulted in the development of appropriate action plans, many of which have been implemented. Numerous sites have been removed, landfills have been capped, and the remainder of sites are nearing the decision document stage.

Griffiss was designated for base realignment under BRAC 93 in the summer of 1993. Site Management Plans (known as BRAC cleanup plans/BCP) for base cleanup are completed and are updated regularly. The BCP is an outgrowth of the existing AF Management Action Plan for the base developed under the federal facilities agreement with EPA and NYSDEC under CERCLA. In conjunction with the cleanups, Griffiss is also seeking to transfer portions of the base property in advance of required cleanup (as newly allowed under CERCLA/CERFA) through the covenant deferral request (CDR) process. Five early transfer areas have already been approved by EPA and the State. CDRs allow the Air Force the ability to transfer property, with appropriate restrictions, prior to completing the remediation process provided the Air Force make various guarantees to complete the cleanup as agreed upon and according to an agreed upon schedule as a condition of the CDR. In addition, numerous other areas which do not have contamination have also been transferred or leased. EPA has reviewed the transfer documents for over 2,500 acres which allowed the former airfield to be transferred and leased by the county as a new Oneida County Airport.

With the numerous cleanups that have occurred, a partial deletion package has been also been submitted by the Air Force on behalf of the Local Reuse Authority (LRA). The LRA wishes to remove clean portions of the former base from the NPL in an attempt promote reuse and development of the property. EPA and the State have reviewed the partial deletion package and have agree (in consultation with the Air Force) as to which areas are acceptable for deletion. We are drafting a Notice of Intent to Partially Delete (NOIPD) portions of the base and hope to public notice the NOIPD within the next few months. Other areas will remain on the NPL and continue through the CERCLA cleanup process. The Five-Year Review document was also used in the partial deletion evaluation and EPA concurred on the protectiveness determinations stated in the Five Year Review on September 15, 2005.

Site Repositories

AFRPA 153 Brooks Road Rome, NY 13441

Information can also be found at the website: www.griffiss.com