

Naval Security Group Activity

Puerto Rico

EPA ID#: PR4170027383

EPA REGION 2

Congressional District(s): 01

Toa Baja

Village of Sabana Seca

NPL LISTING HISTORY

Proposed Date: 6/24/1988

Final Date: 10/4/1989

Deletion Date: 10/7/1998

Site Description

The 2,200-acre Naval Security Group Activity site, a naval communications station which operates a high-frequency direction finding facility, lies next to Sabana Seca, about 11 miles west of San Juan, and is divided into North and South Tracts. From the early 1950s through 1970, the operation's Public Works Department deposited all waste generated at the station at various areas on the South Tract, (communications facilities were and still are located on the North Tract). Materials included paints, solvents, waste oil, and battery acid. A pest control shop also was run on the South Tract from the 1950s through 1979. Workers spilled various pesticides around the shop building. They also mixed pesticides and cleaned applicators in a sink outside the shop that discharged directly to the ground. In 1984, soil samples showed elevated levels of arsenic, lead, and chlordane. Rain could wash soil contaminants through a drainage ditch to a marsh, and the fractured limestone bedrock may allow pollutants to move into the groundwater. Initial studies basewide identified seven potentially contaminated sites, including the former pest control shop and a leachate ponding area, although the source of the leachate is a municipal landfill adjoining the base. Approximately 47,000 people living in and around the station obtain drinking water from public wells within 3 miles of the site. Groundwater also is used for stock watering and industrial processes. Surface water within 3 miles downstream of the shop is used for recreational fishing. The San Pedro Marsh, a large coastal wetland, is within 1,000 feet of both tracts.

Site Responsibility: This site was addressed by the Navy, through Federal actions.

Threat and Contaminants

Soils outside the pest control shop were contaminated with various heavy metals and pesticides. PCB-contaminated materials from another off-site location were stored near the pest control shop. Potential routes for migration of contaminants may threaten the sensitive coastal wetlands. The Cocal River is known to support numerous fish, as well as crab and shrimp species. Blue Land Crabs are abundant in the San Pedro Swamp and are recreationally harvested from it. Stormwater runoff from the shop enters a drainage ditch that empties into a stream. The Puerto Rican boa, designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an endangered species, has been sighted in numerous locations on the station.

Cleanup Approach

This site was addressed in three remedial stages: an initial action and two long-term remedial phases focusing on cleanup of pesticide shop soil and water pollution, and cleanup of the pistol range disposal and leachate pond areas. In addition, screening site investigations were conducted at several other areas of the base (S. Stone Rd. Disposal Area, Bunker 607 Disposal Area, N. Stone Rd. Disposal Area) to determine whether further remedial investigation should be conducted at these areas.

Response Action Status

Initial Action: In 1988, the Navy installed a fence around the former pest control shop to prevent exposure to the spilled pesticides. The site of the former pesticide shop is adjacent to a family housing area and a childrens playground. The fence has been adequate to prevent contact with any soil that may still be contaminated with residual pesticides.

Pest Control Shop: The Navy began an intensive study of soil and water pollution at the site in March 1993. This investigation explored the nature and extent of contamination and recommended the best strategies for final cleanup. The Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study and Proposed Plan were finalized by the Navy and public comment

conducted. The Record of Decision (ROD) was signed on September 20, 1996. The Remedial Design was approved in December 1996 and Remedial Action, installation of an asphalt cap, was completed in April 1997. The area is now used for parking.

Pistol Range Disposal and Leachate Pond Areas: Beginning in 1993, the Navy began an investigation of the pistol range disposal and leachate pond areas. Contaminated leachate at the leachate ponding area originates from the municipal landfill off site, but was included in the studies to protect base water supplies. Several monitoring wells were installed to determine whether the Navy water supply is in danger. The Pistol Range is still active and, unless a release to groundwater is documented, it has been decided to defer any clean up until after closure of the site. The Leachate Ponding Area will be addressed by the Municipality of Toa Baja, the party responsible for the contamination.

Disposal Areas: Beginning in 1993 the Navy started screening site investigations of the Disposal Areas at the Pistol Range, Bunker 607, and N. and S. Stone Road to determine if further remedial investigation should be done. The Navy has conducted further risk evaluation in response to EPA comments and issued a Final Expanded SI Report in March 1997. The Navy issued a Final Proposed Plan in June 1997. These Disposal Areas were addressed in No Further Action RODs, dated September 30, 1997.

Enforcement Status

An Interagency Agreement was signed by the EPA, the Navy, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico on March 19, 1992. The site is participating in the Installation Restoration Program, a specially funded program established by the Department of Defense (DoD) to identify, investigate, and control the migration of hazardous contaminants at military and other DoD facilities.

Cleanup Progress

The Remedial Action for the Former Pest Control Shop, the installation of a 4-inch thick asphalt cap of about 11,000 square feet, was completed in April 1997. The Pistol Range and Bunker 607 Disposal Areas; and, the North and South Stone Road Disposal Areas were both addressed in No Further Action RODs, dated September 30, 1997. The U.S. Navy has completed all construction activities for all sites at the NSGA Sabana Seca Site. Therefore, as of September 30, 1997, NSGA Sabana Seca was listed as site #484 on EPA's List of NPL sites to achieve Construction Completion.

Because no hazardous substances remain at the site above health-based levels, a five-year review does not apply to the NSGA Sabana Seca site.

On October 7, 1998, EPA deleted NSGA Sabana Seca from the National Priorities List.

The Navy closed NSGA Sabana Seca and turned the activity over to the General Services Administration for reuse. The pistol range which is still active, will have to be remediated before the site is closed. The Municipality of Toa Baja is interested in purchasing the Leachate Ponding Area.

Site Repositories

Jaime Fonadella Garriga Public Library, Toa Baja, PR 00951

Naval Security Group Activity Base Library, Building 193, Sabana Seca, PR FPO AA 34053-1000

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Records Center, 290 Broadway, 18th Floor, NY, NY 10007-1866