RECORD OF DECISION

FORMER CAMP ELLIOTT
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Council on Environmental Quality Regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), this document records the remedial action decision for the unexploded ordnance and related debris contamination caused by previous DOD-related activities on a portion of the Former Camp Elliott Training Range. A Feasibility Study of Remedial Action Alternatives and an Environmental Impact Statement have been prepared for the site. Camp Elliott Reservation operated as a tank, anti-tank, and artillery training/practice range during the World War II-Korean War era. A portion of the Former Camp Elliott Reservation that now encompasses Tierrasanta was declared surplus property and transferred to developers in 1968. The community currently comprises over 6,000 residential units plus ancillary office, commercial and public service facilities. The project area includes 1897 acres of remaining open space in the Tierrasanta community. To facilitate comparison and analysis of alternatives, the open space within the project area was divided into sub-areas A, B, C, D, E, and F.

DECISION

During the conduct of the study, it became apparent that no single alternative was appropriate for the entire project area. Therefore, the recommended plan or preferred alternative consists of a combination of alternatives for the various sub-areas. Based on the findings and conclusions of the Feasibility Study, Environmental Impact Statement, and associated correspondence received in response to coordination of this document I have decided that the plan as recommended below be conducted.

Sub-Area A: The plan for this area involves reacquisition and fencing by the U.S. Government of the 167 acres adjacent to the Naval Air Station Miramar, North of the project area. The reacquisition will be accomplished pursuant to a non-CERCLA authority.

Sub-Area B: The plan for this area, which encompasses 85 acres, involves fencing along the southern right-of-way line of the proposed State Route 52. Fencing would occur once the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) has obtained legal right-of-way. This will effectively isolate both Sub-Areas A and B from the rest of Tierrasanta to the South.

Sub-Area C: The plan for this area (Tierrasanta Norte residential development, approximately 358 acres) involves ordnance clearance sweeps using electromagnetic ordnance locators, after selective manual removal of vegatation, in areas to remain as permanent open space (approximately 75 acres), and ordnance clearance sweeps using electromagnetic ordnance locators in the remaining undeveloped area disturbed by the developer.

Sub-Area D: The plan for this area (Regency Hill residential development, 58 acres) involves an ordnance clearance sweep, using electromagnetic ordnance locators, of approximately 23 acres which surround the developing area and form the faces for the mesa, and no action in the remaining area disturbed by the development.

Sub-Area E: The plan for this area (approximately 454 acres located along the eastern project boundary) involves 209 acres, presently U.S. Navy owned, and is not eligible for funding under the DERP formerly used sites program, and 245 acres where 3 separate actions are planned. The plan for the 245 acres is as follows: approximately 56 acres, previously burned, involves ordnance clearance using electromagnetic ordnance locators; 129 acres involves ordnance clearance using electromagnetic ordnance locators after selective manual removal of vegetation; and 60 acres involves ordnance clearance sweeps using electromagnetic ordnance locators and controlled burning for vegetation removal.

Sub-Area F: The plan for this area (approximately 774 acres of remaining open space in canyons adjacent to developed residential or commercial areas) involves ordnance clearance using electromagnetic ordnance locators after selective removal of brush by manual cutting and removal. This area will be given first priority for implementation.

OTHER ACTION

In addition to the plans identified above, a follow-up ordnance test sweep will be conducted one year after the initial clearance effort to monitor and/or verify the clearance effectiveness. Follow-up ordnance sweeps will be conducted based on the results of the one year follow-up test sweep efforts. Also efforts will be made to expand educational programs on unexploded ordnance within the community.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

In arriving at the decision to implement the various preferred remedial actions, several alternatives were considered. They were as follows: (1) Ordnance clearance using electromagnetic ordnance locators after selective manual removal of vegetation, (2) Ordnance clearance using electromagnetic ordnance locators after prescribed burning, (3) Limitation of certain types of development and/or placement of additional development restrictions, (4) Visual sweeps in conjunction with sub-surface electromagnetic detection, where possible without vegetation removal, (5) Restriction of access through signs and fencing, (6) Reacquisition of property by the Government, and (7) No action.

Each alternative was evaluated for each sub-area based on the following parameters: public safety, economic feasibility, technical feasibility, environmental issues, local public opinion, and Federal, State, and local restrictions. Environmental issues included biological resources, cultural resources, land-use, esthetics, air quality, water quality/erosion, recreation, socioeconomics, safety, and construction impacts. Alternatives that were considered to be environmentally preferable are alternatives listed in items 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 above.

Based on the primary objective of the project (to protect public health, safety, and general welfare) and the alternatives analyses, the preferred alternatives listed in items 1 and 2 above are recommended for most sub-areas. Even though these alternatives were the more costly and presented significant, but short term, adverse impacts to the vegetation and wildlife, it was not technically feasible to effectively locate and remove ordnance items from the areas without the associated short term impacts.

MITIGATION

All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the selected alternatives have been adopted. A preliminary cutting plan which minimizes impacts to vegetation has been developed. Prior to implementation, a comprehensive cutting plan will be prepared to assure that all feasible measures to minimize environmental impacts are incorporated into the project. A preliminary prescribed burn plan, considering fire intensity, frequency, duration, species composition, size, pattern, season, extent, weather, fuel, soil and site of the burn, and which minimizes impacts to vegetation, has been developed. Prior to implementation, a comprehensive burn plan will be prepared to assure that all feasible measures to minimize impacts are incorporated into the project.

Vernal pools which may contain the Federally endangered San Diego mesa mint will be avoided in any fence construction or prescribed burn activity. Prior to the unlikely event that vernal pool complexes containing the mesa mint need to be manually cleared of vegetation, coordination with the USFWS pursuant to the Endangered Species Act will be undertaken. Coordination with the USFWS will be conducted regarding those vernal pools containing mesa mint and ordnance contamination.

Every effort will be made to preserve the sensitive southern oak woodland, sycamores, and scrub oaks. All willow and post oak woodlands will be flagged by a biologist during project implementation. Precautions to keep these areas in an undisturbed condition will be taken. A qualified biologist will be on-site during project implementation to minimize adverse impacts on biological resources and to enforce the environmental mitigation commitments of the project.

Vehicle access within the project area will be limited to existing paved and dirt roads and foot paths. Cultural resource sites were found in Sub-areas A, B, and E. No impact from construction will occur in sub-areas A and B. A qualified archaeologist will be present during project implementation in sub-area E to assure that significant impacts to the site are avoided.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A thorough public involvement program has been conducted throughout the site evaluation process. Public concerns, such as safety, socioeconomic and environmental effects have all been carefully considered.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

The environmental documentation has been prepared in accordance with NEPA. The project has appropriately considered all applicable environmental laws, executive orders, and other policies as required.

AUTHORITY

My decision as detailed above has been carefully made in consideration of environmental impacts and other essential parameters as described. The goals of the Defense Environmental Restoration Program for formerly used sites, public safety, fiscal responsibility, and environmental protection are best served by selection of the preferred alternatives presented in this document.

AUG 19 1988

Date

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Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Environment)