

Remedial Investigation, Fort Bliss Closed Castner Firing Range, El Paso, TX U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Tulsa District

Public Meeting #1 Meeting Minutes – 13 May 2015

A public meeting for the Closed Castner Firing Range Remedial Investigation (RI) was held on Wednesday, 13 May 2015 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm at Chapin High School, El Paso, Texas. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the general public on the purpose, scope, schedule, and other details related to the RI project. An open forum question and answer session was conducted at the conclusion of the presentation.

Representatives from Fort Bliss, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the Army Environmental Center (AEC) were presented and participated in the meeting. Representatives from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) were also present at the meeting.

The following is a summary of the information presented, and questions and answers generated, during the public meeting.

Castner Range Discussion - Opening

The PIKA-ARCADIS Joint Venture (herein, “the JV”), the contractor executing the RI, began the Castner Range presentation by summarizing some of the key topics to be discussed. These topics included the goals of the meeting, background on the Military Munitions Response Program (MMRP), RI objectives and tasks, a history of the Castner Range, the current project status and planned field work, safety considerations, and schedule. The JV also noted that the presentation for the meeting would be available to the public on the Ft. Bliss website.

The JV defined some of the key acronyms that would be used during the presentation. The acronyms defined included MMRP, Munitions and Explosives of Concern (MEC), and Munitions Constituents (MC).

Project Goals

The JV introduced the Castner Range RI project scope and stated that the RI would characterize munitions response site (MRS) conditions, determine the nature and extent of MEC and MC, and risk assessments would be conducted. Subjects such as the development of cleanup alternatives, future land use decisions, and munitions removal / remediation would not be addressed by this RI project, but would be addressed during future MMRP phases.

Project Stakeholders

The JV explained the involvement of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army Environmental Command, Fort Bliss Garrison Command / Fort Bliss Directorate of Public Works – Environmental Division, and the PIKA-ARCADIS JV in the Castner

Range RI Project. Additional project stakeholders were also discussed including the TCEQ, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 6, TPWD, multiple local and regional groups, and the public.

RI Objectives and Tasks

The JV presented the phases of the MMRP process and described where the Castner Range RI phase is in the MMRP process.

The RI project objectives were summarized, including gathering sufficient information to characterize MEC presence at Castner Range, assessing potential risks and hazards to human health, safety and the environment, and determining the concentrations and extent of MC.

The JV indicated that project tasks would include technical project planning (TPP) meetings, development of planning documents, community relations support, performance of RI field activities, and preparation of the RI report. He noted the Quality Assurance Project Plan (e.g., the “work plan” for the project) had been completed, to include concurrence from the TCEQ on the approach.

The JV then discussed previous investigations at the Closed Castner Range, including the Wide Area Assessment project, and how the information generated during the previous investigations would be used for the Castner Range RI.

RI Technical Approach

Sufficient data exists to define the boundaries of target areas [also known as concentrated munitions use areas (CMUAs)] in the eastern side of the MRS and characterize the nature and extent of MEC within the CMUAs. Remaining data needs include defining the boundaries of CMUAs (if any) in the western, mountainous side of the MRS, verifying that the MEC density throughout the MRS outside of CMUAs meets the required statistical level, and evaluating the migration potential of MEC from higher to lower elevation areas.

For MC concerns at Castner Range, existing data indicate that higher MC concentrations are correlated to the presence of CMUAs, and that MC does not appear to be present above allowable screening levels outside of the CMUAs. Based on the 2013 WAA field demonstration report, metals are expected to be the primary MC, and explosives contamination is likely limited. The RI must still determine the potential presence of MC in subsurface soil, surface water, and sediment, and the potential for MC migration from higher to lower elevations must be determined.

The JV then presented the specific RI field activities that will provide the information necessary to complete the determinations for MEC and MC. The MEC investigation approach was detailed, which will utilize a combination of visual surveys, analog “mag and dig”, and digital geophysical mapping approaches to characterize MEC presence

throughout the site. The JV then detailed the surface soil sampling process utilizing the incremental sampling methodology (ISM), subsurface soil sampling, surface water and sediment sampling, and groundwater sampling processes. The discussion included details on MEC disposal procedures, natural and cultural resource protection procedures, and munitions safety considerations for the public.

RI Schedule

The JV presented the upcoming project schedule, noting the dates are tentative subject to field conditions, weather, and additional final approvals:

- Field Work: Approximately June 2015 – January 2016
- TPP Meeting #3 During field work
- TPP Meeting #4 During RI Report development
- Public Meeting #2 Approximately November 2015
- Final RI Report: Approximately December 2016

Questions and Answers

After a short break, an open forum for questions and answers was conducted. Both verbal and written questions were presented. The following questions were asked by the meeting attendees.

Question #1 – Can meeting announcements be sent by email? For each meeting, participants are asked to sign in and provide their email address, but the meeting notification for this event did not occur through email.

Answer: The JV responded that email notifications had been used in the past for TPP meetings, and Army would be consulted to determine the use of email notifications for future public meeting announcements.

Question #2 – Please clarify what is meant by “delineation vertically to background.” Would the JV continue to bore and take samples if results are above background levels?

Answer: The JV indicated that some of the chemicals found in munitions constituents are also naturally occurring in the surface and subsurface media, and the TCEQ requires that sample collection continue vertically until naturally occurring (background) levels are achieved. Based on the constituents of concern, it is likely that background concentrations in soils will be achieved within the 20 foot boring depth planned. If the constituent concentrations are above background levels at the anticipated total depth of the borings, the RI approach includes installation of monitoring wells and collection of a groundwater sample (if present), to address the vertical migration issue.

Question #3 – Is the contractor aware of threatened and endangered species present on Castner Range?

Answer: The JV indicated that the contractor team had conducted a review of threatened and endangered species as part of the project planning activities, including preparation of an Environmental Protection Plan. He indicated specific species of concern were not likely to be present at Castner Range, based on the available documentation of studies conducted on the site.

Question #4 –When was the MMRP initiated at Castner Range?

Answer: The JV responded that the Installation Restoration Program (IRP) predated the MMRP (which began in the early 2000's). Prior to that time, MMRP sites would have been handled in the IRP. The first MMRP document for Castner Range was the Site Inspection Report (dated around 2007).

Question #5 – You mentioned that statistics are used in the MEC investigation approach – are these the same statistical approaches that have been discussed in previous TPP meetings?

Answer: The JV confirmed that the statistical evaluation for the MEC approach is the same as previously discussed at TPP meetings. The goal is to verify that there are less than 0.1 MEC/acre outside of the target areas/CMUAs to a confidence level of 95%.

Question #6 – Is the complete RI phase funded and what is the funding status for future phases?

Answer: The JV stated 'Yes' the current RI effort is funded and that the question of funding for future project phases would need to be directed to the Fort Bliss Directorate of Public Works – Environment Division, or Garrison Public Affairs Office, Attn: Donita Kelley, Building 15, Slater Road, Fort Bliss, Texas 79916. The AEC Remedial Program Manager later confirmed that the project is funded through the RI phase. He further explained that the Government programs (budgets) for future requirements 5-10 years into the future. Figures are updated annually. However, funds are not provided by the Government until the requirement is actually 'hit'.

Question #7 (written question) – The field investigation will seek to ascertain the presence of target areas, if any, in the western parts of the range. Discrete borings were mentioned as a location technique. How steep must a slope be before this technique can no longer be employed?

Answer: The JV stated that borings are not being used to identify target areas that could be potentially identified within the steep slopes, as they are part of the MC investigation rather than the MEC investigation. In the steep slope areas, visual survey methods are being used to determine if target areas are present. If so, anomalies that are identified will be dug to determine if a target area is present, to the extent possible. If a target area

is identified, an ISM sample will be collected, if possible. The resulting MC data would be evaluated to determine the need for horizontal and vertical delineation.

Question #8 – The question was clarified to be, at what slope can borings no longer be used in the investigation?

Answer: The JV stated that we have not evaluated steep slopes for vertical delineation with borings so we have not made the determination. If there is not sufficient soil in the steep slope areas for an ISM sample, discrete sampling may be performed. For the steep slope areas, where it is rocky and there is little soil for sampling, the likely transport/exposure pathway is from the slopes down into the arroyos. The RI therefore includes sediment and surface water sampling in the arroyos to address these delineation concerns.

Question #9 (written question) – Will either “analog” or “digital mapping” equipment detect perchlorate propellants?

Answer: the analog/DGM methods identify the presence of metal objects only. Because perchlorate is not metallic, it will not be identified by these methodologies. It would be found by analysis of environmental samples.

Question #10 – Will there be any contaminated media removal as part of the RI investigation?

Answer: No. Removal of contaminated media will be evaluated in a future project phase.

Question #11 – As the RI field work is planned to be conducted in the summer, is it safe to conduct these investigation activities in the heat?

Answer: The JV acknowledged that the heat and elevation are a concern, but the team will work to control and mitigate heat hazards as the schedule lines out. Health and safety planning is a significant part of the planning process for the investigation and safety is the number one priority on this project.

Question #12 – Will the ISM approach for sampling work in areas that do not have soil?

Answer –The JV indicated that a possible resolution would be to collect discrete samples in such areas or if the area is too rocky, chances of MC contamination are minimal as the media would have been transported by rain events, or winds in the area. The JV would make its best effort to collect samples in such areas or present our findings in the report.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM, following the completion of the question and answer sessions.