



Environmental Newsletter

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1. Site Visit to the Dyckerhoffbruch Landfill

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Group at the first landfill mound: Middle School, Environmental Division, and ELW.

In September, students from USAG Wiesbaden Middle School and their partner school, the Erich Kästner School in Wiesbaden-Schierstein, visited the Dyckerhoffbruch landfill, operated by ELW (Entsorgungsbetriebe der Landeshauptstadt Wiesbaden). The trip, organized by the Environmental Division, offered firsthand insight into the structure and impact of modern waste management.

After a brief introduction by ELW staff, the group boarded a guided bus tour through the active and former sections of the landfill. A notable stop was the first waste mound constructed at the site—now fully recultivated and integrated into the landscape—highlighting how landfill areas can be safely reclaimed over time.

Originally a limestone quarry, the site has evolved into one of the region’s most advanced landfills. It now consists of multiple engineered sections designed to meet strict environmental standards. The newest section, opened in April 2024, spans 15 hectares and is designed for low-contamination mineral waste. It will operate for over 20 years, processing up to 300,000 tons annually.

Students learned in detail how landfill construction is designed to protect the environment. Beneath each section lies a complex sealing system made of compacted clay, synthetic liners, and layers of sand, all of which prevent leachate—contaminated liquid formed during waste decomposition—from entering the groundwater. This leachate is collected through drainage systems and sent to on-site treatment facilities. In addition, the landfill captures methane gas, generated by organic waste breakdown, and uses it to fuel a combined heat and power unit, contributing to local energy production.

The visit also included exploration of areas dedicated to environmental education and biodiversity. Students were shown restored zones where landfill surfaces have been rehabilitated into green spaces and habitats for native species. Over 50 bird species have been observed in these areas, emphasizing the site’s dual role as both a functional waste facility and a managed ecological zone.

2. Drinking Water Program: Improving Participation Through Communication

USAG Wiesbaden's Environmental Division has taken significant steps to improve tenant participation in the Army Family Housing (AFH) Drinking Water Testing Program. In past years, the program's success was limited by low sample return rates, which impacted regulatory compliance. To address this, the team launched a coordinated outreach effort in partnership with DPW Housing and Public Affairs.

Through a mix of radio interviews, social media posts, instructional videos, and flyers, tenants were informed not only about how to collect samples, but why the testing is important. This increased public awareness led to a rise in returned samples—from just 60–70% in previous years to over 90%. The success demonstrates the power of clear communication in environmental compliance and community engagement.

In recognition of these efforts, the USAG Wiesbaden Directorate of Public Works received the 2025 Secretary of the Army Environmental Award for Environmental Quality in the Overseas Installation category. The award was accepted by Mary McLeod of the Environmental Division (pictured right), honoring the team's leadership and commitment to public health and environmental stewardship.



3. Invasive Alert: *Tapinoma magnum* Identified in Germany

The invasive ant species *Tapinoma magnum* has recently gained a foothold in Germany, especially in urban and suburban areas of Baden-Württemberg, Hesse, and Rhineland-Palatinate. Native to the Mediterranean region, this species thrives in warm, human-influenced environments and has become a growing concern for scientists, municipalities, and residents alike.



Unlike native ants, *Tapinoma magnum* forms vast supercolonies with multiple queens, making them extremely difficult to control. They nest under pavement, in flower beds, plant containers, and even inside building structures. Their presence can lead to damage to walkways, interference with electrical systems, and displacement of native ant species, thereby affecting local biodiversity.

In Germany, these ants often spread through the commercial plant trade—especially imported Mediterranean plants with soil or root balls. Rising temperatures and climate change only accelerate their northward expansion. Several environmental institutes are now conducting mapping and genomic studies to better understand their

spread and develop response strategies.

How can residents help?

Members of the U.S. community in Germany can play an important role in limiting the spread of *Tapinoma magnum*:

- Be cautious when buying plants from garden centers—check the soil and avoid uninspected imports from southern Europe.
- Report any unusually large or aggressive ant colonies, especially those found near homes, patios, or base facilities.
- Avoid moving soil or potted plants between locations unless inspected.
- Clean garden tools and shoes when visiting new garden sites or nature areas.
- Raise awareness—especially in schools and youth programs—about invasive species and how they affect ecosystems.

Early detection is key. If you suspect an infestation, contact your local Environmental Division or Host Nation environmental office. These ants may be small, but their impact is not. Let's stay informed, alert, and ready to act—on base and beyond.