



**Technical Assistance Services for Communities**  
**Contract No.: EP-W-13-015**  
**Task Order No.: 1**  
**Task Order Title: TASC OSRTI-Multi Regions and HQ**

**Technical Assistance Needs Assessment: Final Report**

**Site Name:** Fort Ord  
**Site Location:** Monterey, California  
**Date:** September 13, 2013

**Introduction**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Technical Assistance Services for Communities Program (TASC) conducted this Technical Assistance Needs Assessment for the Fort Ord Superfund site community. There has been a history of community involvement at the site, with a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) in place from 1994 to 1999 and three separate EPA Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) recipients over the past several years. The TAG program typically supports just one community group at a time. Due to the diverse community interests at Fort Ord, EPA decided to have TASC conduct this needs assessment to better understand the technical assistance needs of the larger community related to the ongoing cleanup at the site and provide recommendations to meet those needs. Cleanup at Fort Ord has been difficult for some community members to understand because of the various agencies that are involved and the different responsibilities they have in the cleanup process. This assessment complements efforts to conduct comprehensive cleanup of the site.

The recommendations contained in this summary are based on:<sup>1</sup>

- Background site and community information gathered online.<sup>2</sup>
  - A telephone discussion with the Fort Ord Users Group at their March 20, 2013, meeting with the following members:
    - Art McLoughlin, Monterey Bay Youth Camp, Fort Ord Recreational Trails (FORT) Friends.
    - Bob Sevene, Wednesday Night Laundry Runners Club.
    - Eric Petersen, Cyclist/Hiker.
    - Henrietta Stern, Monterey Off-Road Cycling Association, FORT Friends.
    - Jerry Cooley, Equestrian.
    - Keith DeFiebre, Central Coast CycloCross Association.
- Stan Cook and Laura Vidaurri of the Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) Environmental Services Cooperative Agreement (ESCA) were also present at the meeting.
- In-person conversations with community members on April 9 and 10, 2013:
    - Dan Amadeo, Nancy Amadeo and Gail Youngblood of Marina in Motion.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that TASC contacted additional community members to request information about their perception of community needs, but responses were not received. Some community members interviewed perceive that these once active community members' lack of response may be due to their frustration with the public participation at the site.

<sup>2</sup> The end of this document provides a list of information sources.

- LeVonne Stone and Donald Stone of Fort Ord Environmental Justice Network, Inc. (FOEJN).
- Mike Weaver, Lance Houston and Richard Bailey of the Fort Ord Community Advisory Group (FOCAG).
- An open community meeting on April 10, 2013, to discuss technical assistance needs with interested community members:
  - Art McLoughlin
  - Cheryl Gainey
  - Eric Petersen
  - Gail Youngblood
  - Jennie Ohayon
  - Kera Abrahams
  - LeVonne Stone
  - Linda Causey
  - Mike Weaver
  - Nancy Amadeo
  - Ralph Laner
  - Richard Bailey
 Ed Walker of the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), Laura Vidaurri of FORA ESCA and Viola Cooper and Judy Huang of EPA Region 9 were also present at the meeting.
- Telephone discussions with past technical advisors on May 2 and 3, 2013:
  - Jeff Edson, past TAG technical advisor for Marina in Motion.
  - Peter deFur, past TAG technical advisor for FOEJN.
- Telephone discussions with EPA Region 9 site team on May 7 and May 10, 2013.
- A telephone discussion with Lenny Siegel of the Center for Public Environmental Oversight, on May 10, 2013.
- Telephone discussions and email correspondence with FORA board members from key neighboring municipalities in July 2013:
  - David Pendergrass, Mayor, Sand City.
  - Gail Morton, Councilmember, Marina.
  - Ian Oglesby, Mayor Pro-Tem, Seaside.
  - Jerry Edelen, Mayor, Del Rey Oaks.
  - Nancy Selfridge, Councilmember, Monterey.
- A telephone discussion with FORA Executive Officer Michael Houlemard on July 10, 2013.

## Site History and Past Community Involvement

Information about site history and past community involvement is well documented and not repeated in this report. Both the Army and FORA hold regular community involvement events to keep the public informed and up-to-date on cleanup activities at the site. Site history and community involvement information can be found on the following websites:

- EPA Site Overview for Fort Ord Site. Available at: <http://www.epa.gov/region09/FortOrd>.
- U.S. Army Fort Ord Environmental Cleanup. Available at: <http://www.fortordcleanup.com>.
- Fort Ord Reuse Authority. Available at: <http://www.fora.org>.
- Fort Ord Reuse Authority Environmental Services Cooperative Agreement Remediation Program. Available at: <http://www.fora-esca-rp.com>.

## **Perspectives on Community Technical Assistance Needs**

Community technical assistance needs are presented from three different perspectives in the following sections: perspectives from the community members that were interviewed, perspectives from individuals who have provided outside guidance to community members, and perspectives from the agencies working on site cleanup and reuse and engaged in community involvement.

### Perspectives from the Community

The community members interviewed shared a range of technical assistance needs during the conversations with TASC which generally fell under the following themes: understanding diverse community interests, gaining better access to information, gaining access to independent technical expertise and effectively raising environmental justice issues. These themes are described in more detail in the subsections below.

A subset of the interviewed community lacks trust in the agencies, however, and this has led to a lack of trust in the information they receive from the agencies. For example, some community members may have difficulty trusting technical experts brought in by FORA because they see the experts as being connected to FORA and the Army. Some community members also may not trust and accept reports and cleanup progress updates from the agencies because they believe there are inconsistencies in the information they receive from the different agencies and they feel that EPA and DTSC are not holding the Army to cleanup requirements. Additionally, some community members feel that their comments and input have not been considered by the agencies, which leads them to believe that the agencies may not value community involvement. Due to these trust issues with the agencies involved in cleanup and redevelopment, Army and FORA outreach efforts alone may not be enough to meet the community's needs.

#### *Understanding Diverse Community Interests*

Some community members interviewed feel that they do not always understand or agree with other community members' interests and feel that some groups receive more attention from the agencies than others. Some feel that there are assumptions about personal agendas and platforms among different community groups and there is not a single trusted source or group in the area. Some community members interviewed feel that it does not help community involvement when some groups are dismissed or ignored, and they feel that community collaboration would be helpful.

#### *Gaining Better Access to Information*

A subset of the community members interviewed are concerned that many people are under-informed and misinformed about the Fort Ord cleanup. Some community members attributed this to both the lack of trust described earlier as well as agency documents and reports that they feel are too technical and inaccessible. Some community members stated that more plain language translation and break-down of documents into an understandable format would help them better understand the cleanup process. Interviewees also mentioned that some community members are also not always clear about how to separate cleanup from reuse issues, what decisions had already been made, and what cleanup areas and issues still offer an opportunity to provide input. Community members at the open community meeting indicated that a flow chart

that succinctly compiles all cleanup activities, documents and decision points from the different agencies overlaid on one charted timeline would be helpful. This compilation would allow the community to better focus on the cleanup decisions that have not yet been made. Another concern is around the many rumors and urban myths that some community members feel are spread throughout the community and voiced at community meetings. Some community members expressed interest in an independent fact sheet or sheets to address these rumors, help disseminate facts, and clarify what science currently exists to address and identify contaminants and types of munitions.

The community members interviewed also would like more effective and accessible avenues to provide input. Some community members would like to have more meetings with decision-makers, such as how the community was able to interact with agencies through the former RAB. Additionally, FOCAG members would like assistance developing the FOCAG website to help better disseminate information. There is concern about accessibility to some historical documents and publications, and some community members feel that improving access to these archives could help strengthen their trust in the agencies.

*Gaining Access to Independent Technical Expertise*

Some community members interviewed identified a need for an independent party to provide expertise and technical assistance, and some are concerned about the independence of some contractors who are paid by agencies. Community members interviewed indicated that they would benefit from independent technical expertise on several specific areas of interest, including ground water contamination, prescribed burns and health, soil contamination, munitions cleanup and reuse. Table 1 below summarizes these interests:

**Table 1 Community Areas of Interest**

Major Area of Interest	Specific Areas of Interest
Ground water contamination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of technical documents such as the annual ground water report.</li> <li>• How the status of ground water remediation compares with the proposed cleanup.</li> <li>• Which ground water wells to watch carefully.</li> <li>• Where there are increasing and decreasing trends in contamination levels.</li> <li>• Why these trends are occurring.</li> <li>• Smaller-scale community- or neighborhood-level meetings to better understand contaminated ground water and drilling activity in local areas.</li> </ul>
Prescribed burns and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How smoke from the prescribed burns is being monitored.</li> <li>• How smoke from burns impacts the general population.</li> <li>• Where the monitoring areas are during and after burns.</li> <li>• Background air quality levels.</li> <li>• The change in monitoring standards from PM<sub>10</sub> to PM<sub>2.5</sub> and how the results between the two standards can be compared.</li> <li>• A toxicologist or epidemiologist to help community members understand ways in which the community’s health could be impacted by prescribed burns.</li> <li>• Review and analysis of health reports and studies.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plain language presentation of burn and health information to the community.</li> <li>• An environmental health center to serve the Fort Ord site community.</li> </ul>
Soil contamination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What happens to the soil after a prescribed burn.</li> <li>• Effects of pesticides on the soil at Fort Ord.</li> <li>• Review of technical soil documents.</li> </ul>
Munitions cleanup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of technical munitions cleanup documents.</li> <li>• More general munitions information.</li> <li>• Better understanding of plans and background documents from FORA ESCA.</li> </ul>
Reuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More green space.</li> <li>• Building on blighted areas rather than pristine landscapes.</li> <li>• Having part of the property converted to a camp for kids.</li> </ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressing a number of rumors and myths circulating within the community.</li> </ul>

*Effectively Raising Environmental Justice Issues*

FOEJN continues to strongly advocate for the workers, vendors and small businesses that were most negatively affected by the closure of the military base. At issue are jobs, job training, affordable housing and health impacts. None of the other community members or stakeholders that TASC spoke to have taken positions against these environmental justice (EJ) issues, and many have echoed their importance. However, there has been growing frustration with the manner and frequency with which these EJ issues are being raised. Due to this, FOEJN feels that EJ issues are being dismissed. From conversations with community members and other stakeholders, TASC identified three issues which have prevented the EJ community from effectively communicating issues:

- The venues in which EJ concerns are being repeatedly expressed have not been appropriate. It would appear to be more practicable for EJ issues to be placed before the decision-makers that will directly develop and execute plans for redevelopment and can create the type of employment and economic opportunities sought by EJ leaders.
- The timing of these EJ expressions relative to the business at hand at any given meeting and relative to the current stage of the overall cleanup, redevelopment and reuse process has not been appropriate. EJ concerns that are neither tied to current events nor actionable by the meeting conveners tend to increase the frustration of meeting attendees.
- The EJ concerns have not been specific enough to make it possible for decision-makers to consider and discuss specific actions, programs and steps to address them.

Perspectives from Individuals who have Provided Outside Guidance

The Fort Ord site community has received outside guidance from technical advisors as a result of the EPA TAG program as well as from representatives of other environmental organizations. These individuals also perceive the community’s severe lack of trust in the agencies, a need for technical assistance to empower and educate the community and a need to unite the community.

One individual feels that while there are still issues about reuse, there seems to be general agreement about cleanup. Due to the trust issues in the community, however, people do not

believe information from the agencies. These individuals also observed that the community does not trust EPA or the Army and feel that the community strongly needs reassurance that their interests are being represented and their voices are being heard in the cleanup process. It seems that the community members do not believe that the Army values community involvement because the RAB was disbanded and the community believes FORA shares the Army's attitude toward community involvement.

The individuals who have provided outside guidance recommended an independent party to help the community understand what is working well, what technological limits exist in cleanup and what can and cannot be done under Superfund because community members do not believe information from the agencies. They indicated that some topics the community could better understand include munitions, soil, ground water and health. They also discussed the value of technical assistance in empowering and engaging the community.

They feel that community groups need to be united, as there is no real leader that represents the whole community. They discussed a need to challenge and address community groups' assumptions about other groups by bringing diverse community groups together and letting them engage in a facilitated setting to identify shared interests and goals.

#### Perspectives from the Agencies

FORA board members and EPA Region 9 site team members provided agency perspectives on community needs. Perspectives among and between FORA board and EPA Region 9 site team members often varied. Some agency representatives feel that the community would like to see more transparency from the agencies so they are able to hold the agencies accountable for cleanup, and these representatives observed strong community frustration about this. They observed frustration from the community about not receiving responses to their comments and from the community's long history of distrust in the agencies. These agency representatives feel that if community involvement were working correctly, it would embrace everyone in the community and provide them with a place in decision-making.

Other representatives feel that existing community involvement processes are already very successful. They said they had not received any community complaints about not being heard, but rather only community complaints about not liking the outcome or that there were no agency actions resulting from their comments. They mentioned that community activist groups in particular complain and sometimes use the community involvement process itself to stall and halt any progress. These representatives also mentioned that there was always room for improvement and that current communication efforts should be continued.

Some representatives noted that the community often is unclear about each agency's roles and responsibilities and community members sometimes bring concerns to meetings that are not necessarily related to the agency hosting the meeting. Some representatives specifically referenced EJ issues being brought up at meetings when the meetings focused on other topics. They recognized and affirmed the importance of EJ issues in the community, particularly with the diversity in the area that includes the African American, Latino, Korean and Filipino communities. However, they discussed that the EJ message does not always come across or resonate due to the way the concerns are presented. Sometimes the EJ issues are not directly relevant to the meeting at hand, or the issues have been repeatedly shared at the wrong venues and times. A shared sentiment among some members of the FORA board and the EPA Region 9

site team is the need to improve communication about what is and is not feasible under Superfund, in the Ford Ord cleanup process and with existing technology. This would help the community members better understand their potential impact in the process and may help address the issue of transparency, as some actions are outside the realm of the cleanup and it is important for the community to understand which of their concerns can be realistically addressed by each agency. They think it would be valuable for community members to understand which documents should be prioritized for commenting, as it is unrealistic to provide public comment for every report at Fort Ord.

Agency representatives also thought the community would benefit from independent technical experts to help them understand what cleanup approaches are working well and to help answer questions, as trust issues are preventing the community from believing information from the agencies. Some members of the FORA board and the EPA Region 9 site team also discussed a need to provide more plain language materials, a need to continue and improve existing efforts to present information in an understandable format, and a need to use new ways to present the materials. One particular comment was about improving the navigability and accessibility to resources on the FORA website.

Some members of the FORA board also discussed the value of having working sessions and colloquia to bring together experts, community members and FORA board members and staff for conversation and education. Members of the FORA board and members of the EPA Region 9 site team mentioned the overall importance of accessible information and technical assistance, particularly due to community distrust of the agencies and the community's desire for greater transparency in the cleanup and other processes.

### **Recommendations for Technical Assistance**

There is not a legal and formal process for community involvement that is required to be followed at Fort Ord. TASC thinks that the community would benefit from implementation of the recommendations described below. These recommendations are specific to technical assistance and are somewhat limited due to the status of the cleanup. These recommendations could be fulfilled by a variety of agencies and TASC offers suggestions in the text below for potentially appropriate agencies.

1. Hold a Technical Assistance Services meeting for the community. With the diverse community at Fort Ord, it is important to consider how technical assistance will be provided to meet the needs of the entire community. An ideal way to meet the needs of multiple groups simultaneously and use resources efficiently is by first figuring out what the community wants as a collaborative group. While other agencies have already organized meetings and workshops for the community, the purpose of this meeting would be to discuss the community's needs identified in this needs assessment, prioritize them and determine a path forward for addressing them. An independent facilitator or a technical assistance specialist could organize and facilitate this meeting.

A timeline that summarizes all cleanup activities, documents and decision points from EPA, the Army and FORA could be developed for this meeting to show the community the big picture of what is going on and where there are opportunities for providing comments and community involvement. This timeline could also be a resource that

EPA, the Army and FORA could regularly reference and discuss with the community. Additionally, the meeting agenda could include a discussion of common concerns and what is and is not feasible under Superfund, in the Fort Ord cleanup process and with existing technology. EPA, the Army, FORA or a collaboration of these agencies may be able to host such a meeting.

2. Depending on the outcome of the Technical Assistance Services meeting suggested above, there could be additional Technical Assistance Services meetings where technical assistance needs are met and new ones are requested. These Technical Assistance Services meetings could be integrated into existing meetings or this could be a new series of meetings.

One thing that has worked well at other sites is having a technical assistance specialist serve as an independent liaison between the community and the agencies at and between such meetings. The technical assistance specialist would attend the Technical Assistance Services meetings, help communicate with the community and answer community questions. The technical assistance specialist could also help guide community members about which venues are most appropriate for commenting on specific concerns, direct community comments and questions to the appropriate responsible agencies, guide community members with the timing of comments to make sure they are appropriate and relevant, help community members access current and historical documents, guide document reviews, discuss shared goals and organize the dissemination of information to the community. In addition to enhancing community involvement, a technical assistance specialist who worked with the community could help address the community's lack of trust in the agencies. When needed, the technical assistance specialist could also bring in independent technical experts to provide technical expertise on community areas of interest related to cleanup.

Additionally, Technical Assistance Services meetings could be a space for diverse community members to share their perspectives with each other, better understand different concerns and identify ways to collaborate and unite as a community. Decision-makers could be invited to attend these meetings as well, to provide more opportunities for the community to interact with them. EPA could host these meetings or collaborate with the Army and FORA to host these meetings together.

3. Provide comprehensive technical information and resources to the community over the web. This could be part of the existing Army website or a new website. This would include an archive of all technical assistance fact sheets and document reviews, historical documents and have information about upcoming cleanup activities and a schedule of community involvement opportunities. EPA is currently redeveloping its website and this may also help address this recommendation.

## **Other**

Help the community articulate environmental justice needs in a way that is more actionable. This recommendation is outside of the realm of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), but local reuse authorities and jurisdictions may be

able to help with this. In addition, the community may want to seek an environmental justice grant or other technical assistance through Environmental Justice programs.

1. Provide the services of a Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) expert to EJ leaders who have voiced strong economic concerns and needs for the workers and families most directly impacted by the closure of the military base. CBAs are technical instruments drawn up by city planners, community members and developers to ensure that specific local populations benefit from planned redevelopment in very clear ways. TASC feels that it would be beneficial for all Fort Ord stakeholders if EJ leaders were able to present the solution to their concerns in the form of a set of CBAs that would be more understandable and actionable by the appropriate jurisdictional entities. The CBA expert could help them:
  - a. Understand what others have done in the past and what might reasonably be accomplished at Fort Ord.
  - b. Develop specific CBAs to be presented to the appropriate authorities.
  - c. Understand how land-owning entities operate in regard to CBAs and exactly where each municipality and owning entity is in terms of their plans and outreach to developers and contractors.
  - d. Develop a strategy for successful negotiation.
2. Provide a capacity-building training to EJ leaders about the most effective ways to express their issues and have their issues addressed.

### **Sources Consulted for Background Information on the Site and the Community**

- EPA Site Overview for Fort Ord Site. Available at: <http://www.epa.gov/region09/FortOrd>.
  - Third Five-Year Review Report, 2012.
- Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure Office: Final Analysis of the 2011 Community Survey and 2011-2012 Community Outreach Program.
- Fort Ord Environmental Justice Network, Inc. Available at: <http://www.foejn.org>.
- Fort Ord Reuse Authority. Available at: <http://www.fora.org>.
- Fort Ord Reuse Authority Environmental Services Cooperative Agreement Remediation Program. Available at: <http://www.fora-esca-rp.com>.
- U.S. Army Fort Ord Environmental Cleanup. Available at: <http://www.fortordcleanup.com>.

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