



New Mexico White Sands Missile Range

Facility and Location

White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) was established in July 1945. WSMR is a test and evaluation command installation operated primarily for research, development, testing, and evaluation of weapon and space systems, subsystems, and components. The facility borders Fort Bliss, Texas to the south and Holloman Air Force Base to the west. There were 38,029 missile firings completed at WSMR between 1945 and 1989, including the world's first atomic explosion at the Trinity site on July 16, 1945.

Facilities located entirely within WSMR boundaries include: the San Andres National Wildlife Refuge, White Sands National Monument, and the NASA White Sands Test Facility. WSMR also has cooperative agreements with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and The Nature Conservancy. The New Mexico State University Cooperative Fisheries and Wildlife Research Unit of the National Biological Service conduct research with WSMR.

Media Sampled and Findings

Drinking Water — Prior to 2007, 5 of 50 samples, taken at seven sites, detected perchlorate from 3.4 to 22 ppb.

Groundwater — In 2011, 38 of 38 samples detected perchlorate from 2.2 to 18,500 ppb. In 2010, five of five samples detected perchlorate from 14.4 to 20,300 ppb. Prior to 2007, 5 of 369 samples detected perchlorate with a high of 30,000 ppb.

Soil — Prior to 2007, 12 of 16 samples detected perchlorate with a high of 2.2 ppb.

Appropriate Actions

Prior to 2007, drinking water samples and current groundwater samples were above the EPA and DoD Preliminary Remediation Goal of 15 ppb. White Sands' water systems will be sampled again in 2012. Restoration and compliance cleanup sites were sampled during the 2012 scheduled sampling cycle.

Corrective action for the open burn/open detonation (OB/OD) site is in progress. A Closure Plan/Post Closure Care Plan was submitted to the New Mexico Environment Department in January 2011 and is currently under review. The plan will determine the nature and extent of constituents of concern and provide direction on post closure care for the facility. The objectives are to conduct a subsurface investigation, install a protective soil cover for the site, and perform post closure maintenance at the site.