

# Restoration Advisory Board

## REPORT TO CONGRESS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996

Supplement to the Defense Environmental Restoration Program Annual Report to Congress for Fiscal Year 1996

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### Restoration Advisory Boards

The Department of Defense (DoD) is pleased to provide Congress with a report on DoD's Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) initiative for fiscal year (FY) 1996. The information in this report is provided in response to the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996*, which requires that DoD submit a report on the activities of and funding for each RAB. The act also requires that DoD submit information about DoD's new technical assistance for public participation (TAPP) initiative.

In FY 1996, DoD implemented several activities to advance the RAB initiative. The chief accomplishments included developing and publishing proposed rules for both the RAB and the TAPP initiative, developing and distributing the *RAB Resource Book*, and creating a RAB section within DoD's Environmental Restoration homepage.

***"We remain firmly committed to involving the community in the environmental cleanup process through RABs. We see early and continued participation and advice from the community resulting in better and quicker cleanup decisions."***

Patricia A. Rivers, P.E.  
Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Cleanup

### UNDERSTANDING RABs

It is DoD's policy to involve local communities as early as possible in the decision-making process for environmental restoration activities at installations. RABs, which have become a significant component of DoD's community involvement activities, embody the philosophy that teamwork is the key to success. The RAB "team" is composed of representatives from DoD, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), state government agencies, tribal governments, the local community, and local government agencies. Adopting the principle of using "co-captains" to foster a working partnership, each RAB has two co-chairs: one representing the DoD installation and the

other selected by the community. DoD believes that working in partnership with local communities and other federal and state agencies to address their concerns early in the process will enhance its efforts under the environmental restoration program, and ultimately reduce government expenditures and time by resolving issues before they can become roadblocks.

RABs serve a twofold purpose. First, RABs provide a forum through which representatives of the community, the installation, and regulatory agencies discuss and exchange information about DoD's environmental restoration program. Second, RABs give stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the cleanup process and make their views known to decision makers. The RAB does not substitute for other community involvement initiatives, such as preparing community relations plans, issuing public notices, holding public meetings, and establishing and maintaining information repositories. Rather, the RAB complements those activities by serving as a focal point for dialogue.

RABs also meet the requirements of 10 United States Code (U.S.C.) 2705(c), which directs DoD to establish technical review committees (TRC). If an installation already has a TRC, it can be converted to a RAB if there is sufficient and sustained interest within the community. At many installations at which TRCs had become a trusted sounding board, the TRC has been converted to a RAB.

RABs are successfully operating in almost every state in the nation and in several U.S. territories. Each RAB is tailored to meet the needs of the community and based on the status of the installation's cleanup program. RAB members perform a variety of functions, and have contributed to the cleanup process by:

- **Increasing Community Understanding.** RABs help increase community understanding of DoD's cleanup objectives and the complex regulatory requirements under which DoD must conduct cleanups. RAB members often become vocal proponents for DoD's cleanup plan; with community support, cleanup typically proceeds more smoothly and quickly.
- **Reviewing Plans and Documents.** One of the most fundamental roles that RABs play is the review of cleanup plans and documents. These documents are the foundation for decisions regarding cleanup. RAB members often raise questions or issues which reflect the concerns of the community. Resolution of these issues is an important step in the cleanup process.
- **Participating in Site and Project Prioritization.** Many RABs participate in relative risk site evaluations, prioritization of sites and sequencing of projects, making recommendations which impact an installation's work plans. In this manner, sites which are of most concern can be addressed first.
- **Providing Advice.** RAB members provide advice to decision-makers on many aspects of the cleanup program, perhaps most significantly in selecting a remedy for sites. This makes the installation aware of which option or options the community is comfortable with.

- **Acting as a Resource for the Community.** Many RABs take seriously their responsibility to keep the community informed of installation cleanup activities. Some RABs have helped the installation prepare community relations plans, compose fact sheets, information bulletins, and newsletters for the community.



*Cecil Field Naval Air Station (NAS)*

*RAB members observe thermal treatment of soil. RAB participation in the Fast-Track Cleanup Program was a contributing factor in Cecil Field NAS being presented the Secretary of Defense Environmental Cleanup Award for Installation Restoration.*

#### **Criteria for Establishing a RAB**

- Closure of the installation involving transfer of property
- At least 50 citizens petition for an advisory board
- The federal, state, or local government requests formation of an advisory board
- The installation determines the need for an advisory board

#### **UPDATE-1996**

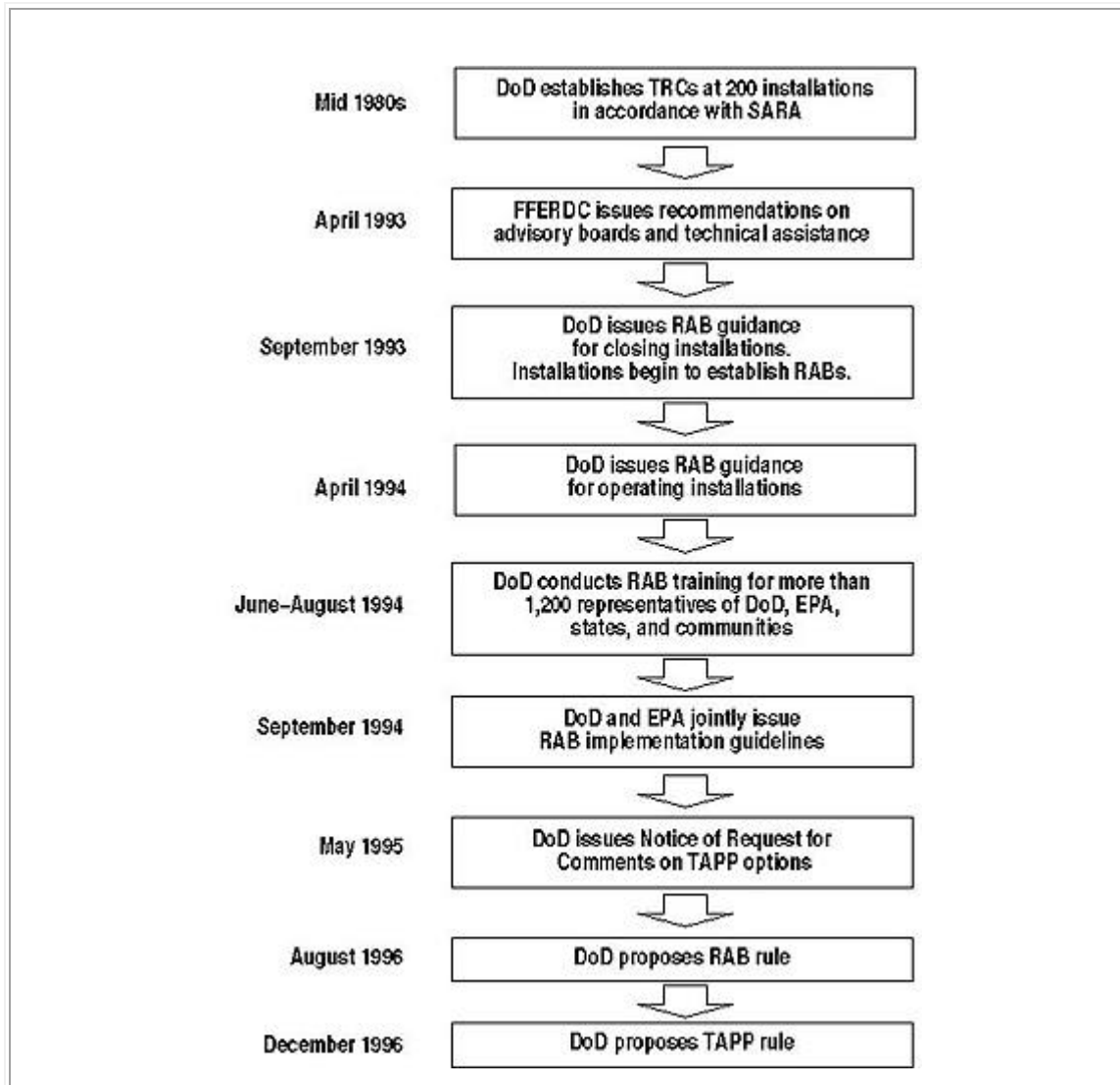
September 1996 marked the second anniversary of the NAS Cecil Field, Florida RAB. The RAB reviewed its work over the past year including activities and goals and jointly agreed on areas for change. All RAB community members confirmed their commitment to serve a second two year term, a clear indication of the team

spirit that has developed. One effective communication tool the RAB has developed is the *Cecil Fielder* newsletter. Mailed to all members, it includes meeting information, homework assignments, and a calendar of events. It helps the RAB develop quality meeting agendas and assists members in preparing for meetings. The partnership that has developed between the RAB members is built on respect and trust. This arrangement provides an atmosphere in which to give input and further the common goal of the environmental restoration of NAS Cecil Field.

### Historical Perspective

Under DoD's early efforts to increase the involvement of communities in decisions about environmental restoration, technical review committees (TRC) were established at more than 200 DoD installations to provide interested parties with a forum to discuss and provide input into environmental restoration activities. In 1994, DoD recognized the need to refine its basic policy on how installations interacted with local communities. In its management guidance for the Defense Environmental Restoration Program, DoD set forth new policy on increasing community involvement in decisions regarding cleanup. DoD also recognized the need to quickly communicate the new policy and procedures to the people charged with its implementation at the installation level, and provided training to more than 1,200 individuals. In September 1994, DoD and EPA jointly issued guidelines for implementing the policy and identifying the role each stakeholder would play in the RAB. Currently, more than 250 installations are participating in RABs throughout the United States. Refer to the RAB/TAPP timeline shown below.

#### **RAB/TAPP Timeline**



## During FY 1996

During FY 1996, DoD implemented several activities to support the RAB program. These activities, many of which were introduced in the RAB supplement to the *Defense Environmental Restoration Program Annual Report to Congress for FY 1995*, include the following.



### *The RAB Rule*

The *National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1996* required DoD to prescribe regulations for RABs. DoD met this requirement by publishing in the Federal Register in August 1996 the RAB proposed rule. The proposed rule is based on the experience of DoD in operating RABs since 1993 and describes

the establishment, composition, purpose, and funding for RABs. The rule is designed to be consistent with existing DoD and EPA guidance on RABs as well as with the recommendations set forth in the Federal Facilities Environmental Restoration Dialogue Committee's (FFERDC) Final Report. DoD worked hard to structure the rule so as to ensure maximum flexibility for RAB members and installations. To ensure that everyone who wished to comment could, DoD extended the closing date for comments from November 4, 1996 to January 20, 1997. DoD mailed the rule to more than 500 DoD environmental restoration stakeholders and also requested that the DoD Components forward the rule to their installations for review. These outreach efforts were intended to distribute the rule to as many individuals as possible. As of January 20, 1997, DoD had received comments from local community members, states, the EPA, and public interest organizations. After comments are analyzed and incorporated into the proposed rule, DoD intends to make the rule final in 1997.



More information on the RAB Rule is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.dtic.mil/envirodod/rab/rab-fedr.html>



### *The TAPP Rule*

During FY 1996, DoD worked diligently to develop a program that would facilitate public participation in its restoration program. Authorized by the *National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1996*, the TAPP program allows DoD to provide community members of RABs and TRCs with technical assistance, such as a technical advisor. An advisor can provide assistance in interpreting scientific information and the potential health effects of exposure to contaminants. Under the rule, eligible training must benefit the mission and all RAB members equally and be relevant to the environmental restoration activities occurring at the installation.

Based on comments received in response to a May 24, 1995 Request for Comments on Options for Providing Technical Assistance, DoD published a proposed rule on December 27, 1996 which describes procedures for the TAPP program and requests public comment. As with the RAB rule, DoD was interested in and actively sought public comment. DoD mailed a

copy of the proposed rule to more than 500 stakeholders and also requested that the DoD Components forward the rule to their installations for review and comment.

The proposed rule defines how the TAPP program will operate, who is eligible to receive technical assistance, and how to apply for technical assistance. The proposed rule also outlines dollar limitations and reporting requirements. Funding for this program will come from the Component Environmental Restoration Accounts for operating installations and formerly used defense sites (FUDS), and from the Defense Base Closure Account for installations approved for closure or realignment.

DoD hopes to conduct pilot demonstrations of the TAPP program in 1997. In FY 1996, no funds were allocated to the program because it was under development and had not been formally established. However, several community groups near DoD installations received funds from EPA's Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) and Technical Outreach Services to Communities (TOSC) programs.



More information on the TAPP Rule is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.dtic.mil/envirodod/rab/index.html>



### *The RAB Resource Book*

Continuing to provide useful, practical tools and information to installation personnel to help them establish and operate effective RABs is an ongoing effort for DoD. To better meet this goal in FY 1996, an interagency working group developed the *RAB Resource Book*. Each section of the book contains a brief summary of DoD policy, outlines suggested key steps, and offers tips on avoiding roadblocks. The last section of the book lists useful sources of information, such as guidance and references, telephone numbers of hotlines, and the names of contacts who can provide assistance. In addition, an appendix presents "real-life" examples of actual tools that other installations have used to develop and support their RABs. This book provides both existing and new RABs with practical tools and useful references to help them work without having to "reinvent the wheel."



The *RAB Resource Book* is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.dtic.mil/envirodod/rab/rabresource.html>

## Other RAB Resources

The *Directory of Restoration Advisory Boards* lists the RABs established at military installations throughout the United States and its territories. The directory is a tool that members of RABs can use to facilitate the exchange of information, lessons learned, and build partnerships. The directory gives RAB members direct access to other RABs by providing telephone and facsimile numbers and mailing and e-mail addresses for the installation and community co-chairs. The directory also appears in the RAB section of DoD's Environmental Restoration Program homepage.

The fact sheet, *Updating Your RAB to Meet BRAC Needs*, describes major changes that a RAB may undergo when its installation is converted from an active facility to one closing or realigning, as well as suggests possible actions to facilitate the transition. The fact sheet also provides other available sources of information about RABs; some of the sources listed can be downloaded directly from the home page.



### *RAB Resources on the Internet*

During FY 1996, DoD made use of the latest technology to enhance its public outreach efforts by creating a RAB section on DoD's Environmental Restoration Program homepage. Surfers on the Internet can find a directory of RABs, copies of the joint DoD and EPA Implementation Guidelines for RABs, a fact sheet on base realignment and closure (BRAC) issues likely to affect RABs, copies of the RAB and TAPP rules, and the *RAB Resource Book*. The RAB section has provided an excellent mechanism through which the public can access information on RABs.



The RAB section is located on the World Wide Web at <http://www.dtic.mil/envirodod/rab/index.html>

## *DoD Component Accomplishments*

In FY 1996, the Army issued guidance pertaining to RABs. In May 1996, the Assistant Secretary of the Army issued policy emphasizing the importance of RABs in the Army's restoration program. The new Army RAB guidance was issued in October 1996, updating the original 1994 guidance. The FUDS program also issued guidance in October 1996. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force issued guidance in April



1996 which defined the RAB's role in cleanup activities at the installation level. This guidance is being used to plan cleanup projects.

## **OPERATIONS AND FUNDING**

FY 1996 is the first year DoD has formally collected data on the activities of each RAB and the funds installations expended in establishing and operating their RABs. Information requested and collected includes the make-up of RAB membership, the types of activities RABs have undertaken during the fiscal year (such as participating in and reviewing relative risk site evaluations as well as reviewing plans and technical documents), the type of advice RABs have provided to government decision makers on environmental restoration, and RAB expenditures. Analysis of the data provides DoD with a clearer picture of how RABs have contributed to installation activities. More detailed information on the activities and funding of each installation participating in a RAB is provided in the table at the end of this report.

*"One of my first acts as DUSD(ES) was to establish Restoration Advisory Boards (RAB). ... RABs, and the openness and trust they inspire, have made an enormous contribution to improving the Department's environmental record, and to putting in place cleanups that are responsive to community needs. It has been a pleasure to meet with RAB members around the country, and I am always struck by their dedication and enthusiasm. They are an asset to the Department of Defense and the communities they serve."*

Sherri W. Goodman  
Deputy Under  
Secretary of Defense  
(Environmental Security)

### *RAB Community Representation*

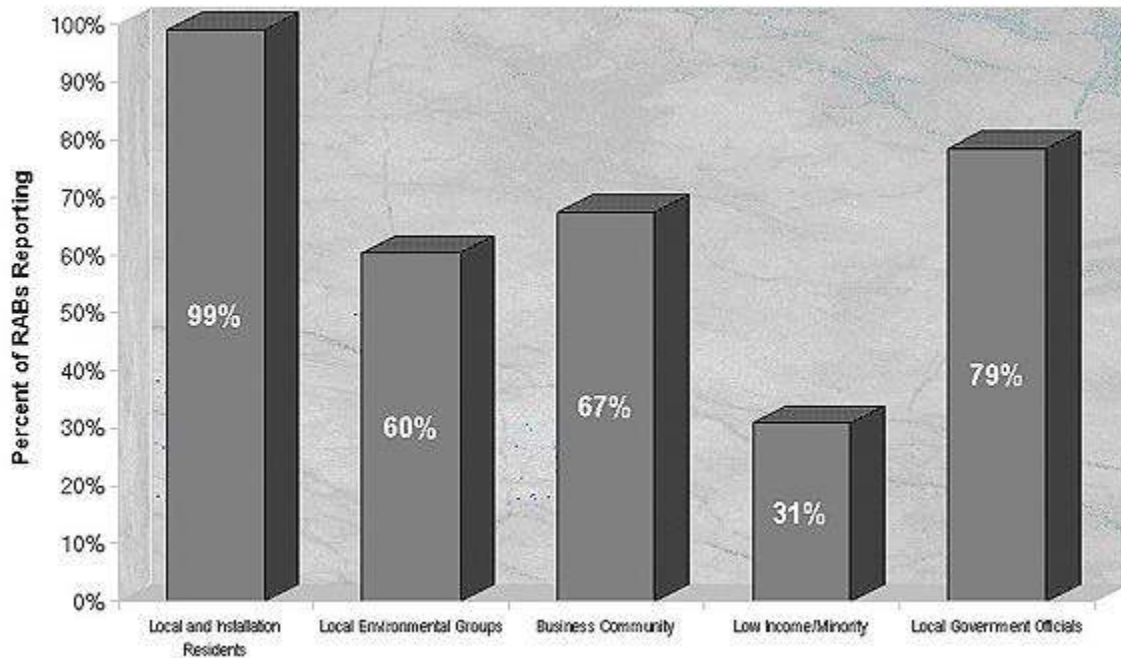
RABs are charged with communicating an installation's cleanup plans to the community and soliciting the community's views and concerns. DoD guidelines require that each RAB reflect the diversity of the community in which it operates. In addition, the guidelines state that every effort should be made to ensure that a broad spectrum of individuals or groups (including those groups traditionally under represented in the

decision-making process) be included. By bringing together people who reflect the many diverse interests within the community, a RAB helps identify issues of concern and reduce potential communication problems that could result in delays. It is DoD's intent that this partnering approach be effective in incorporating the diverse needs and concerns of communities affected by environmental restoration activities.

The information collected on community representation of RABs operating in fiscal year 1996 indicates that the majority of RABs have diverse and appropriate membership. As expected, information collected from RABs currently in operation indicate that nearly all (99 percent) have RAB members that are local or installation residents. Most installations also had representatives from local government agencies as members of their RABs. Likewise, more than half of the installations reporting indicated that representatives from local environmental groups and the business community participate as RAB members. About a third of the installations reported that they had members of their RAB from the low income or minority population.

<b>Installations Participating in a RAB</b>	
Army	49
Navy	107
Air Force	106
DLA	4
FUDS	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>283</b>

## Community Representation



### *RAB Activities*

RABs around the country have accomplished a tremendous amount of creative and effective work over the past year. A successful RAB takes on many diverse responsibilities. Those responsibilities include:

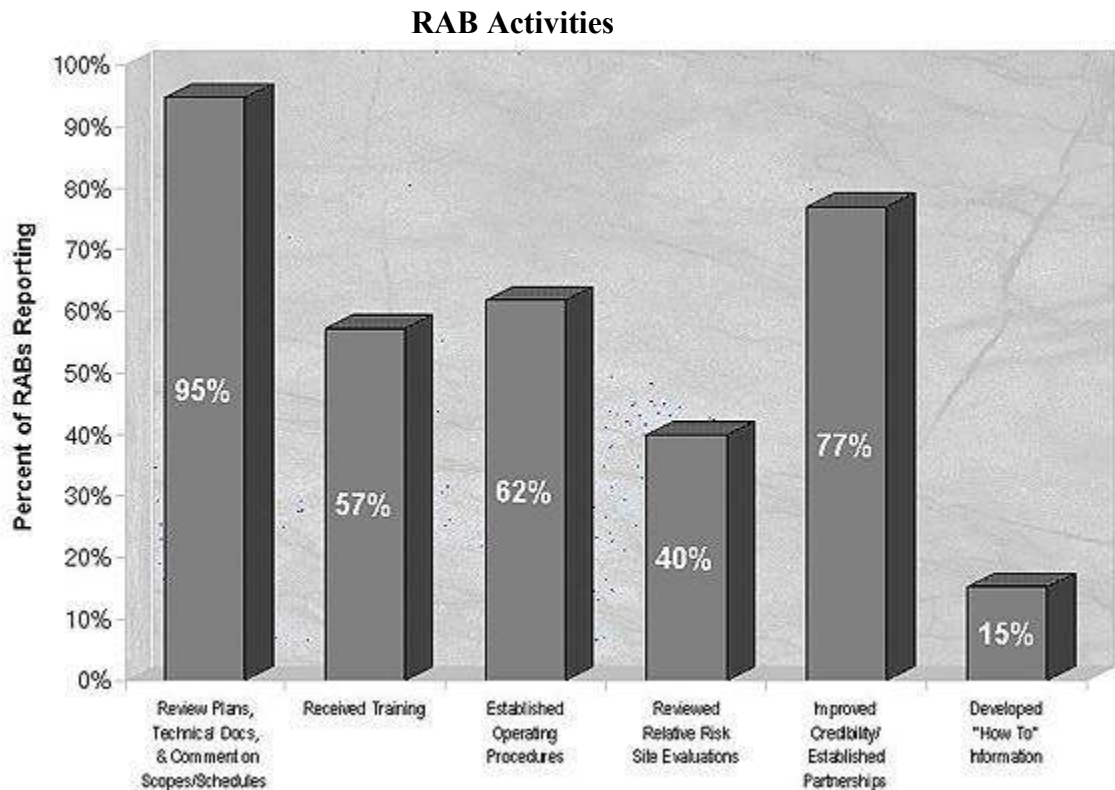
- Establishing partnerships among stakeholders
- Reviewing plans and technical documents
- Providing comments or advice on environmental restoration issues
- Participating in or reviewing relative risk site evaluations
- Identifying applicable standards and proposing cleanup levels that are consistent with the planned reuse
- Educating the members of the RAB and the community
- Establishing operating procedures
- Conducting regular, publicly announced meetings that are open to the public

Nearly all (95 percent) of RABs reporting in FY 1996 indicated that their members participated in reviewing plans or technical documents or provided comments or advice that affected the scope or schedule of studies or cleanup activities. Most installations (77 percent) also indicated that the establishment and operation of their RAB improved their overall credibility and strengthened their partnership with the community. More than half of the installations reporting also indicated that the members of their RAB had received training and had established operating procedures. More than a third of the installation reported that their RABs reviewed relative risk evaluations for sites at their installations. A

limited number of installations (15 percent) reported that members of their RAB developed "how to" information or lessons learned.

***"Our RABs help build community support for DoD's environmental restoration program programs. More importantly, they help steer DoD in the right direction, and help prevent future problems."***

Congressman Robert A. Underwood, (D-Guam)



### *RAB Advice*

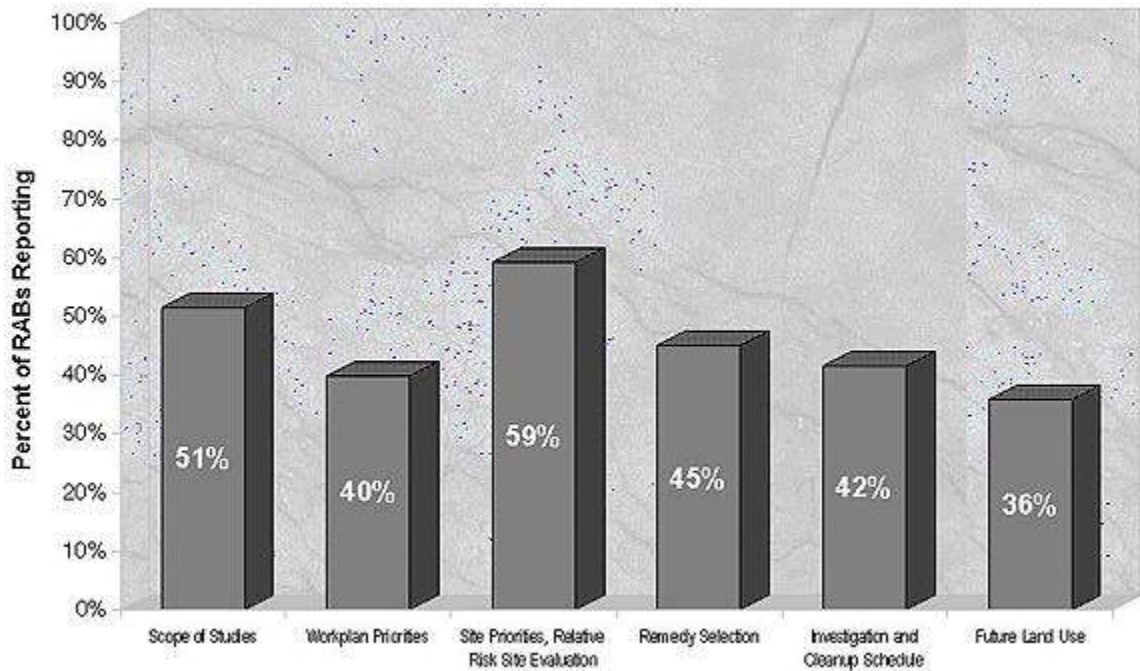
RAB members provide advice to DoD and regulatory agencies throughout the decision process for environmental restoration activities at military installations and FUDS. Among the responsibilities of the RAB, the task of addressing issues important to environmental restoration (such as scope of studies, site priorities, relative risk site evaluation, remedy selection, schedules, and future land use) is

central to improving a community's understanding of the activities being undertaken to clean up the installation.

DoD considers the advice of RABs when making decisions about the cleanup approach at a site and ways to effectively educate the community about restoration activities. For example, at the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Tustin, the RAB advised the BRAC Cleanup Team (BCT) to consolidate multiple small landfills into one large landfill, thus freeing up more land for residential development while reducing long-term operation and maintenance (O&M) costs. Such advice from RABs is helping DoD and EPA conduct environmental restoration activities in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Approximately half of all RABs reporting indicated that members of their RAB had provided advice in these categories: scope of studies, work plan priorities, site priorities or relative risk site evaluations, remedy selection, study or cleanup schedules, and future land use. Almost half (45 percent) of the RABs reporting indicated that their members are providing advice on selecting technologies used for cleaning up sites. This fact is significant because it indicates that RAB members are becoming knowledgeable about site conditions and the cleanup process.

### RAB Advice



### Funding

Section 324 of the FY 1996 Defense Authorization Act established a \$6 million limit for funding RAB administrative expenses and the TAPP program. Eligible expenses are those routine administrative costs which are directly related to the operations of the RAB. Examples of these expenses are listed in the margin. DoD expended \$4.5 million for RAB administrative support during FY 1996, which was within the congressionally-mandated funding limit. No funds were allocated for the TAPP initiative because it had not been formally established.

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

During FY 1997, DoD expects more RABs will continue to be established while existing RABs will continue to provide input on environmental restoration decisions and priorities. DoD also will continue training on policy and make outreach a high priority so that new RABs can avoid "reinventing the wheel," and minimize expenses. One of the first training efforts in FY 1997 has been undertaken by the DoD Central Region Environmental Office, which provided RAB training in December 1996 in Kansas City, Kansas. More training is planned covering:

(1) policy, (2) lessons learned, and (3) risk communication. In addition, the FUDS program has established a goal of forming more RABs at FUDS sites and expects that this training will help make the process run more smoothly.

DoD also plans to finalize the RAB and TAPP rules and is working to conduct pilot demonstrations of the TAPP program in FY 1997. As more and more bases close or undergo realignment of their mission and RABs have completed their work, guidance is needed on adjourning RABs. DoD plans to develop guidance in FY 1997 addressing the issue of how the RABs are adjourned.

### **Examples of RAB Administrative Expenses**

- Meeting announcements
- Preparation of agendas
- Meeting materials and minutes
- Production of documents for RAB members
- Meeting logistics
- Facilitators

The future success of DoD's environmental restoration program depends on its ability to incorporate the diverse view of all stakeholders into the decision making process while not burdening the process with additional expenses. To ensure that the selection of safe, efficient, and cost-effective alternatives meet the concerns of the affected community, the community must be involved in the process.

Cameron Station's closure in 1995 is a milestone in the RAB program. The RAB at Cameron Station held its final meeting on January 30, 1996, took a final tour of the installation, and then prepared a summary report of its activities and reported on the status of cleanup projects. The RAB made two recommendations in the report. First, it requested that the developer or real estate agent provide to all potential buyers moving into the community a disclosure statement regarding the area's cleanup projects; second, it recommended that mature trees be saved wherever possible and that a natural storm water runoff area be created.

## INSTALLATION STORIES

The following stories more fully illustrate the integral role a RAB can play in enhancing the public's trust in DoD's environmental restoration program.

### Fitzsimons Army Medical Center, Colorado

Fitzsimons Army Medical Center, a Denver Army hospital, was placed on the BRAC list in 1995. Fitzsimons' RAB was formed in the spring of 1996 and held its first meeting in May of the same year. The RAB currently has 22 members with seven representing DoD, EPA, the state of Colorado, and the local health department. The remaining 15 members represent a broad cross-section of the community, including private citizens, a local redevelopment group, and local business associations. From the beginning, Fitzsimons' RAB has been actively involved in providing community input and disseminating information to local citizens about the Army's BRAC cleanup program at Fitzsimons and related issues of concern to nearby community members.

One of the first tasks facing the RAB was to review and discuss plans to remove low-level radiological wastes from a landfill belonging to the installation's medical center. The RAB also took on the job of helping Fitzsimons to plan, develop, and complete a community relations plan (CRP), which will serve as a guide for the Army and the RAB in carrying out programs to enhance public involvement in the cleanup program. With the advice and the assistance of the Army, the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment, and EPA's regional office, RAB members developed a plan for improving the CRP and assisted in conducting community

interviews to determine community concerns and information needs. RAB members helped in conducting some 60 interviews with local citizens and organizations.

Fitzsimons' RAB also has worked closely with the University of Colorado, local business groups, and the local redevelopment authority. RAB members have kept up-to-date on cleanup and land reuse issues through presentations that have included an explanation of the hydrogeology of groundwater and a briefing on land reuse proposals. In FY 1997, Fitzsimons' RAB will receive training in "pollutant pathways" and be briefed on the groundwater studies conducted on the installation, and the RAB will assist the Army in reaching the local community members with this same information.

The RAB also is planning to publish the first issue of a cleanup newsletter that will be sent to concerned citizens living in communities surrounding Fitzsimons. Current plans call for publishing the newsletter twice a year. In addition, the RAB is in the process of addressing environmental justice issues by recruiting new members who represent minority groups in the area.

***"There is no doubt that having the input and perspective of RAB community members throughout this process has made a difference in developing the Fitzsimons' CRP."***

Jeannine Natterman Community Involvement Specialist  
Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE)

### **Air Force Plant 4, Fort Worth, Texas**

In May 1996, the Air Force Plant (AFP) 4 environmental team took the initiative to combine its RAB with the RAB established at Carswell Air Force Base, which now operates as Naval Air Station (NAS) Fort Worth. The combined RAB is advantageous to both DoD and the community. DoD benefits as the costs incurred for preparing for RAB meetings are greatly reduced, while the community receives more information during one coordinated setting and is exposed to how two environmental programs can work successfully together.

Cleanup efforts were expedited by involving the RAB in the decision-making process. Through review of plans and technical documents, the RAB members were



able to provide concerns and advice on the AFP 4 Proposed Plan of Action for cleanup. Because the RAB helped to achieve community buy-in on environmental issues early in the process, they effectively eliminated the possibility of having to stop and restart cleanup action due to lack of community buy-in.

The combined RAB helped improve installation credibility by facilitating open communication and trust with the local community. Through its efforts at education on restoration technology, the AFP 4 environmental team has established strong partnerships with stakeholders. Developing information to explain innovative technologies, such as Tracer Tests, is just one example of how the RAB's success in educating the community is achieving public acceptance of the Superfund cleanup.

***"The people on the arsenal staff, the Army representatives, and the two EPA people have developed a certain amount of trust and respect for each other which has not compromised their own concerns. They have learned how to work together and it has brushed off on us."***

Reverend Alvin R. Abbott,  
Community Co-Chair,  
Joliet Army Ammunition Plant RAB

### Joliet Army Ammunition Plant, Illinois

The RAB at Joliet Army Ammunition Plant in Illinois has greatly enhanced the community's understanding of and support for the installation's cleanup program. Established in FY 1996, site tours and regular meetings included training on topics such as ecological risk assessments and cleanup technologies. These activities have enabled the RAB to provide advice on complex cleanup issues. Each member presents the concerns of their constituency to the Army and regulatory agencies. In turn, RAB members take information back to the community on cleanup activities, promoting broader awareness. The Army plans to present proposed cleanup options in FY 1997, and expects the community to be highly supportive because they participated in the development of these options.

## Naval Station, San Diego, California

The Naval Station San Diego RAB has shown commitment to learn, participate, and relay environmental information back to the community.

Naval Station San Diego's RAB has aggressively sought to learn as much as possible about hazardous waste, its properties, associated risks, and cleanup technologies. They have been instrumental in collecting and reviewing educational audiovisual materials, recommending topics for training workshops, and attending site tours to get a first-hand look at the Installation Restoration Program (IRP) sites.

After only one year of operation, the RAB has made several significant impacts on the IRP at Naval Station San Diego. Their input helped pave the way toward changing a removal action plan from disposal to a preferred treatment and recycling option. The RAB even took the initiative to write a letter to the state regulatory agency in support of a specific cleanup plan and to encourage timely review and approval of Navy documents.

Possibly the most significant difference made by the RAB is their high level of interest in disseminating information to the public about Naval Station San Diego's IRP. The RAB has established a communications subcommittee, which reports monthly to the full RAB and presents recommendations to the Navy on ways to keep the local residents and interested parties informed about and involved in the program. The RAB has set up information booths at two large events, including the San Diego Earth Day celebration and the Mirimar NAS Air Show. RAB members also have taken the initiative to speak about the IRP at meetings of local groups including the school district, Parent-Teachers Association, and social-civic organizations of which they are members. Their input to the Navy has been instrumental in developing multi-lingual materials to inform and reach various local ethnic neighborhoods.

Communication between the installation and the community is no longer a simple matter of promoting community relations through traditional methods that offer little opportunity for the community to respond and contribute. Innovative outreach programs like that achieved at Naval Station San Diego must continue to bring the public into the environmental restoration process so that a dynamic exchange will occur between DoD and those most affected by environmental restoration activities.

***"I was pleasantly surprised by the openness of the environmental staff members at Travis Air Force Base. They often go out of their way to answer a question or get a document to a community member. In the***

*process of cleaning up the environment, the Air Force also cleans up a previous bad-guy image."*

Cheryl McNabb  
Community Co-Chair  
Travis Air Force Base RAB

### Travis Air Force Base, California

The RAB members at Travis Air Force Base (AFB) in California have come a long way from the group of community members and regulatory agency representatives who first met in January 1995. The diverse group of 20 members have become much more technically educated on environmental issues. To aid in their understanding, Travis AFB has created a *Chemical Reference Handbook* for use by RAB members. The handbook provides information on the contaminants present at the base and allows the reader to understand the impact and threat posed by each chemical.

One of the first issues the RAB worked with was community concern over a construction project on Travis AFB to build three ball fields, a state-of-the-art car wash, and an expansion of a family campground. Construction would take place at the site of a 1950 B-29 crash which had received adverse media coverage as rumor spread that a nuclear weapon was on board the plane that crashed. Travis AFB conducted an extensive field investigation and published a complete report which proved there was no radiological contamination at the site. The RAB reviewed the results of the investigation and actively sought community acceptance for the construction project.

The Travis AFB RAB Community Relations Group successfully provided an information booth at Air Expo 96. During the two-day show, RAB members assisted Travis Installation Restoration Program (IRP) personnel in staffing the booth, which presented the progress made in environmental restoration at the installation. RAB members and IRP staff answered questions and provided explanations and handouts to several thousand people. The RAB also publishes a newsletter highlighting the accomplishments and activities at Travis AFB.