



**RESTORATION
ADVISORY
BOARD
(RAB)**

**REPORT TO
CONGRESS FOR
FISCAL YEAR
1997**

*Supplement to the Defense
Environmental Restoration
Program Report to Congress*

RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARDS

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Defense (DoD) continued to strengthen its environmental cleanup program through partnerships with local communities during fiscal year 1997 (FY97).

These partnerships are important because they lay the groundwork for mutual trust and sharing of information. Partnerships also foster good will between installations and local communities and help to overcome potential obstacles before they delay installation cleanup efforts. Restoration Advisory Boards (RABs) played a major part in the development of these partnerships because they provide an open forum for the exchange of information between installation officials; members of the local community; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and state, local, and tribal governments.

Among DoD's most significant RAB-related efforts of FY97 was the development of the Technical Assistance for Public Participation (TAPP) program. The National Defense Authorization Act of 1996 allows DoD to help RAB community members use the services of independent experts to explain the more technical aspects of installation cleanup projects. The TAPP program is the means of providing this assistance.

This report summarizes the status of DoD's RAB program and TAPP development efforts for FY97. It is provided in accordance with the

National Defense Authorization Act of 1996 and fulfills the statutory reporting requirements for RAB and TAPP activities.

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Decisions about site cleanup may affect the welfare of entire communities. RABs give such affected communities a voice in these important decisions. As Joanne S. Brown, community co-chair of the RAB at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, says about her RAB, a RAB's value is "that it provides for the involvement of the community in the decision-



*RAB meeting
Naval Air Station (NAS) North Island, CA*

making process for environmental cleanup.” This sentiment is typical of those expressed by numerous RAB members. DoD Components understand the need for such community input and are committed to supporting it.

DoD’s community outreach efforts are long-standing. In the mid-1980s, DoD began establishing Technical Review Committees (TRCs) to involve local citizens in the cleanup process. In 1993, as a result of recommendations made by the Federal Facilities Environmental Restoration Dialogue Committee (FFERDC), DoD began establishing RABs to expand community participation (the requirements of statutory law 10 United States Code §2705(c), which directs DoD to establish TRCs, are also fulfilled by the establishment of RABs).

Each RAB is led by a DoD co-chair and a community co-chair. These co-chairs share responsibility for developing meeting agendas and ensuring that community concerns about cleanup issues are raised and discussed. The co-chairs work to foster teamwork and open communication to make the RAB effective.

RAB members also play an active role in the cleanup planning process. For example, the

RAB at Fort Carson has reviewed work plans for site cleanup and strives to improve members’ understanding of the installation’s site prioritization and budgeting process. These efforts have been deemed “invaluable” by the RAB’s DoD co-chair, Dave Sealander. Fort Carson’s community co-chair, Samuel Johnson, expressed similar views, describing the RAB as

“THE RAB IS A VITAL LINK BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND THE INSTALLATION THAT ENHANCES THE OVERALL RESTORATION PROGRAM.”

**SAMUEL JOHNSON, RAB COMMUNITY CO-CHAIR
FORT CARSON, CO**

“a vital link between the community and the installation that enhances the overall restoration program.”

A key to the relationships that RABs forge between

communities and installations is the forum the RABs provide for the exchange of ideas. The opportunity to share views on environmental cleanup issues also provides a link between diverse groups and interests within the local community. The value that this diversity provides for an installation’s cleanup efforts was noted by Ed Keller, the DoD co-chair of the RAB at Oakland Army Base in California. He said, “The board’s diversity allows differing viewpoints about the base’s environmental cleanup to be heard and helps us to be responsive to the wishes of the community. It helps strengthen our cleanup decisions.”



As indicated previously, RABs allow interested parties to participate more extensively in the cleanup process than is possible through TRCs. However, RABs are not intended to replace other community involvement tools such as community relations plans, public notices, public meetings, and information repositories. Although this report focuses on DoD's recent RAB and TAPP accomplishments, it is important to note that DoD also supports community involvement in several other ways. At the installation level, participation in activities such as Earth Day celebrations, site tours for the public, and school visits supplement community involvement plans.

Sufficient and Sustained Community Interest

DoD policy requires that a RAB be created when there is sufficient and sustained community interest. Circumstances that point to such interest or otherwise indicate the need for a RAB may include:

- ◆ A closing or realigning installation involving transfer of property
- ◆ 50 or more citizens petitioning for a RAB
- ◆ A request from a federal, state, or local government body for formation of a RAB
- ◆ An installation decision that a RAB is necessary

RAB Member Involvement

RAB members have contributed to DoD's environmental restoration program and cleanup process by:

- ◆ *Increasing Mutual Understanding* — RABs increase community understanding of DoD's cleanup objectives and the complex regulatory requirements under which DoD must conduct cleanups. Similarly, RABs increase DoD's understanding of community concerns.
- ◆ *Reviewing Plans and Documents* — RABs review cleanup plans and documents, which are the foundation for cleanup decisions.
- ◆ *Participating in Site and Project Prioritization* — Many RABs participate in relative risk site evaluation and prioritization of sites. They also make recommendations that influence an installation's cleanup work plans.
- ◆ *Providing Advice* — RAB members provide advice to decision makers on many aspects of the cleanup program, including the selection of remedies.
- ◆ *Acting as a Resource for the Community* — Many RABs keep the community as a whole informed of installation cleanup activities.

RAB OPERATIONS AND FUNDING

DoD collected FY97 data on RAB activities and on funds expended in the establishment and operation of RABs. Installations reported on RAB community representation, RAB activities (such as reviewing plans and technical documents and participating in training sessions), the types of advice that RABs have provided to environmental cleanup decision-makers, and FY97 expenditures.

With this information, DoD can attain a better understanding of RABs' operations, their contributions to installation activities, the level of funding they require, and developing trends. More detailed information about the activities and funding of each installation participating in a RAB is provided in the table at the end of this report.



Increasing Mutual Understanding

Air Force Installations Galena Airport, Campion Air Station, and Kalakaket Creek Radio Relay Station, Alaska

At Galena Airport, Campion Air Station, and Kalakaket Creek Radio Relay Station in Alaska, a joint RAB was formed to sensitize the Air Force to the concerns of interested parties in this remote area of Alaska. These Air Force installations are in close proximity and share similar restoration issues affecting the same communities. Therefore, a joint RAB was established in FY95. This RAB has provided a forum for discussion of the impacts of Air Force activities on traditional Native Alaskan lifestyles and food sources. In addition, participation in the RAB has helped the Air Force and the community develop a more cooperative relationship by accommodating community concerns where possible and making cleanup more responsive and acceptable to the interested parties. Scott Tarbox, the Air Force's co-chair, noted these benefits, saying, "RABs are a useful forum for discussion of cleanup between the Air Force and the people directly affected by environmental pollution and remediation activities. Our RAB at Galena has helped the Air Force and the community form a positive partnership and is an essential part of the cleanup process, allowing the Air Force to gain the stakeholder perspective."

This RAB has proved to be a mutually beneficial partnership between the Air Force and the community. For example, through its members' personal knowledge of past disposal practices, the RAB has helped the Air Force identify additional areas of environmental concern (areas with storage containers for hazardous substances or petroleum and additional contamination). At the same time, the Air Force has provided community residents with the training they need to better understand and participate in the cleanup process. "From a community perspective," said Marvin Yoder, RAB community co-chair, "the RAB has been very productive. The community has more information available, its concerns are now focused, and the stakeholders are united and empowered to establish priorities for the cleanup action items."

This reciprocal communication has fostered a trusting relationship, especially between the Air Force and the Loudon Tribe. The tribe has asked to be involved in the Air Force's meetings with EPA and has invited the assistance of the Air Force in developing tribal environmental policy. The experience with this RAB shows that effective communication and respect for others' concerns are an essential part of the cleanup process.

"RABS FOSTER AN IMPORTANT PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN OUR MILITARY AND THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THEY SERVE. THIS TYPE OF INTERACTION IS CRITICAL IN MANY OF ALASKA'S COMMUNITIES. REMEDIATION PLANS FOR ALASKAN SITES MUST INCLUDE CONSIDERATION OF ALASKANS' UNIQUE LIFESTYLES AND LIVING CONDITIONS TO BE SUCCESSFUL AND TO MAINTAIN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND THE MILITARY. I'M PLEASED TO KNOW THAT THE GALENA RAB PROVIDES ALASKANS IN THE REGION WITH A FORUM TO AIR CONCERNS AND CALL ATTENTION TO THEIR UNIQUE SITUATIONS."

SENATOR TED STEVENS (R-ALASKA), CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Community Representation

To best represent the local community, RAB membership should be balanced while reflecting the diverse interests within the community. According to the available data, diversity among RAB members is being achieved.

All installations reported that their RABs were largely made up of local residents or community members. In addition, a large number (82 percent) of the installations reported that local government officials participate in their

RABs. The data also indicated that the RABs of more than half of the reporting installations include representatives of the business community, members of local environmental groups, or environmental activists. Many RABs include representatives from all of these groups. Other groups represented, although in smaller

percentages, are installation residents (30 percent) and low-income and minority groups (33 percent).

Because RAB members provide DoD with insight into community concerns and act as liaisons between the community and DoD, the

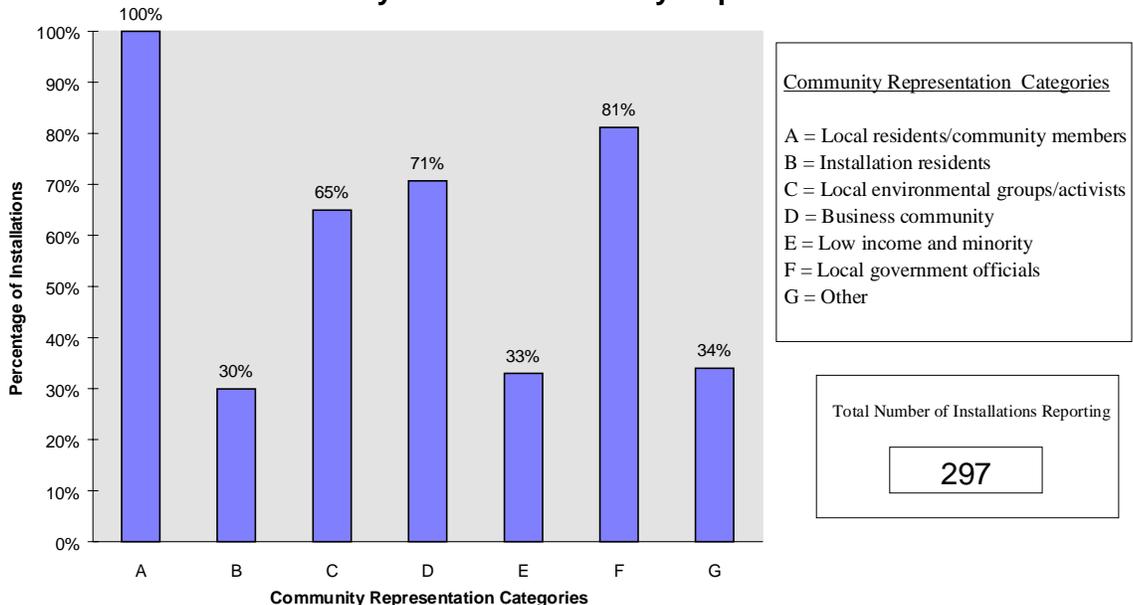
RAB membership should represent the community as a whole. Low-income and minority groups traditionally have been underrepresented in the cleanup decision-making process. By tailoring RAB membership

drives in low-income and minority communities, DoD has made progress in increasing the representation of these groups. DoD is pleased to note that, as mentioned previously, about one-third of the reporting RABs now have low-income or minority group representation, according to FY97 data.

“THE BOARD’S DIVERSITY ALLOWS DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS ABOUT THE BASE’S ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP TO BE HEARD AND HELPS US TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THE WISHES OF THE COMMUNITY. [THIS DIVERSITY] HELPS STRENGTHEN OUR CLEANUP DECISIONS.”

**ED KELLER, DoD CO-CHAIR
OAKLAND ARMY BASE, CA**

Summary of RAB Community Representation





Providing Advice

Navy Installation NAS Whidbey Island, Washington

NAS Whidbey Island, in Washington, was placed on EPA's National Priorities List of hazardous waste sites in 1990. The installation's cleanup team, known as "Team Whidbey," draws on the dedicated participation and expertise of the Navy, regulators, and the community in all aspects of the cleanup program.

In 1993, to obtain more community involvement in the installation's cleanup decision-making process, NAS Whidbey Island formed a RAB, becoming the first Navy installation to do so. The RAB works with Team Whidbey to review proposed cleanup actions and to suggest improvements and cost savings. The growing partnership between the installation and the local community through the RAB has resulted in a degree of trust that allows free exchange of ideas and information.

Ed Oetken, the RAB's community co-chair said, "The RAB tries to look at the relative importance of all the work that needs to be done and recommends a balanced approach to get the work done with the dollars available. As a group of citizens representing a wide spectrum of viewpoints, we have been able to show that this approach has broad support."

Since NAS Whidbey Island is surrounded by Native American lands, the RAB also has provided a forum in which the community can share unique cultural concerns with the Navy — concerns that may not have been noted otherwise. One concern of a local tribe was the preservation of numerous on-site burial grounds and artifacts from an ancient Native American civilization. Crowfeather Halsen, president of the Admiralty Inlet Preservationists noted, "We developed a positive working relationship. They avoided intruding upon known burial sites as much as possible and restored as much of the land as possible to its original topography."

NAS Whidbey Island's active partnership with the RAB and use of new technologies and innovative approaches have resulted in a successful fast-track cleanup over much of the affected area. In fact, in 1995, NAS Whidbey Island won the Installation Cleanup Award for Environmental Security. With the active and vocal participation of a RAB that is rich in diversity, Team Whidbey has been able to move the cleanup program into the remediation phase in many areas, while preserving the unique cultural and environmental character of the installation.



Project information on NAS Whidbey Island is available on the World Wide Web at:
<http://www.naswi.navy.mil/>