

MTBE PLUME (continued from page 1)

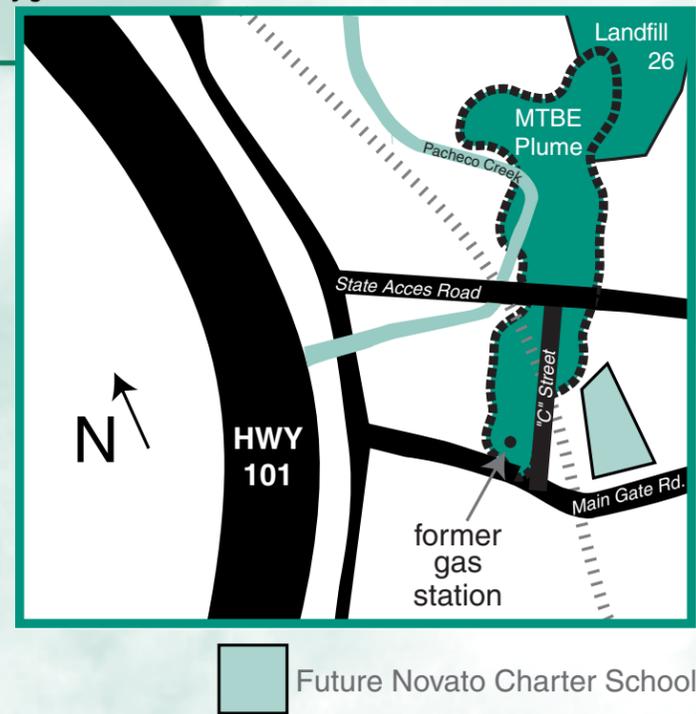
Q: With all the construction going on there is a lot of dust being stirred up. Are we breathing in anything harmful with the dust?

A: No, nothing other than the dust itself. The surface soil is not affected by the gasoline constituents from the gas station.

Q: At the March 28th meeting, the Navy said they needed to turn in a report to the RWQCB by this Summer about how to address the plume. Has this been submitted yet, and what are the options being considered?

A: The Navy sent the first draft of the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to the RWQCB in May. The options being considered include in-situ soil vapor extraction, phytoremediation, bio-remediation, monitored natural attenuation, and more aggressive techniques, such as air sparging.

figure 1



Q: What has been the effect of the plume on Pacheco Creek?

A: In addition to groundwater monitoring, the Navy also performs surface water testing, focusing on Pacheco Creek. On a quarterly basis, the Navy samples eight locations along the Creek for surface water quality. Concentrations of MTBE in the Creek are well below the acceptable levels established by the regulatory agencies. Well before Pacheco Pond, the levels of MTBE decrease to below 1 ppb, which is the lowest detectable level.

Q: How much work is usually done to characterize plumes on other sites? When a gas station site is closed on an urban street corner, do you do more testing than what has been done here?

A: The regulatory agencies took a conservative approach at Hamilton, and therefore the testing done to characterize the site went beyond what is normally done when a gas station is closed. The gas station site at Hamilton has met all of the RWQCB's criteria required for designation as a low risk site.

LANDFILL 26

In 2000, the Army recorded elevated levels of methane at Landfill 26, shown in Figure 1. The Landfill operated from the 1940s until 1974 when it was closed. The Army constructed an impermeable cap over the debris in 1995. The cap consists of a 6-8 foot thick layer of clay, plastic sheeting, a geo net, drainage piping, and fill material. Methane has started to accumulate under this cap and is migrating to the surface where it combines with air and disperses. Although the methane does not present an immediate health risk, the Army is working with the Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) to develop a way to "vent" the methane, allowing it to be dispersed passively. The main issue is funding to implement the chosen solution in a timely manner.

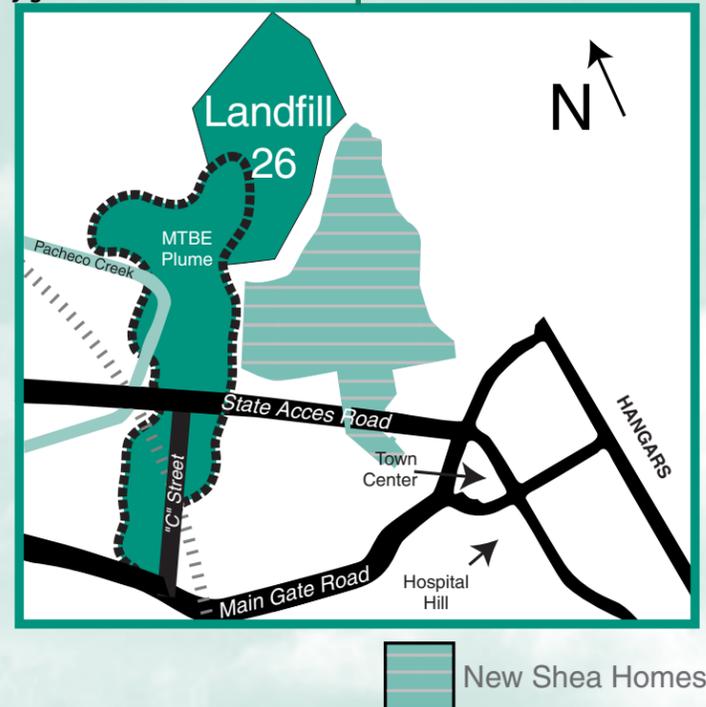
Q: Are we in danger of breathing methane by living in the vicinity of Landfill 26?

A: No. The Army has not collected any data that shows methane in the breathing zone. The methane mixes with the air and disperses as soon as it seeps from the ground.

Q: Is there a long-term health risk associated with methane?

A: Methane itself is not a toxic substance. However, if the methane is allowed to accumulate there could be a long-term health risk based mainly on the danger of combustion. The Army is focusing on implementing a system that allows the methane to vent passively so that there wouldn't be any risk to local residents.

figure 2



Q: One of the options for venting the methane is to build trenches along the edges of the Landfill. Would this pose a problem for the future reuse of Landfill 26 as a recreational area?

A: We are not proposing open trenches. The trenches would be enclosed, using a soil layer to cover them and a series of small pipes allowing the methane to rise to the surface and mix with the air. The trenches wouldn't be a potential hazard for children because they would not be visible or accessible.

Q: Why are you focusing on the southside of the Landfill when higher readings were also recorded at the northern edge?

A: We are currently focusing on the south side of the Landfill because that is where people are living. However, we are seeking funding to address methane accumulation across the whole site, and will implement a global solution as soon as we can.

Q: When do you anticipate having funding available to do this work?

A: Hamilton has been authorized \$250,000 to do ongoing monitoring this year. Additional funding would be needed to implement the chosen solution, whether that is trenches or other options being considered by the Department of Toxic Substances Control. We will probably have to wait until the start of the next fiscal year, October 2001, to receive additional funding.

Hamilton Links

Army BRAC Property

Outparcel A-4 The Army responded to comments received from the Regional Water Quality Control Board on the closure report, and is currently finalizing the document.

POL Hill The Army responded to the regulators' comments on the closure report, and is currently finalizing the document.

Hospital Hill The Army submitted the Finding of Suitability to Transfer (FOST) for Hospital Hill to the regulators on February 16, 2001 and is awaiting comments.

Formerly Use Defense Sites (FUDS)

North Antenna Field More sampling of the site is needed. The Regulatory Review for the Remedial Investigation will be submitted to the regulators by the end of August.

Landfill 26 The Army installed 15 new gas probes between the landfill and the Shea Homes development to detect methane. The Draft Remedial Measure Study was submitted to the regulatory agencies in March 2001. The Army and the regulatory agencies are now developing a long-term solution for the site.

Commercial Areas

Hamilton Parkway is expected to open by the end of July, as soon as the traffic light is in operation.

The City of Novato has taken over the Hamilton Town Center complex to create an art and cultural center. One building is leased out to the non-profit organization Indian Valley Artist. Another building is leased out to several commercial artists. A Hamilton Deli Café is scheduled to open in August.

Renovation of Hangar #5 is nearly complete! The new tenants will be announced soon.

Navy BRAC

The Navy transferred the Spanish Knoll area to the Coast Guard.

The Navy completed the final Remediation Investigation Report of the gas station site, and is continuing to develop the Corrective Action Plan and the Final Risk Assessment. The gas station site will be sold to the City of Novato for commercial/industrial development.

Wetlands Restoration Project

The Bay Conservation Development Commission, working with the California Coastal Conservancy, is currently conducting hydrologic modeling and geomorphological studies that will help in the design process of the Hamilton wetlands restoration project. The California Coastal Conservancy will hold design workshops later this summer for the conceptual plan.



BRAC Environmental Office
Hamilton Army Airfield
1 Burma Road
Novato, CA 94949

RAB UPDATE

RAB Responsibilities

The main responsibility of a RAB member is to attend bimonthly meetings and share information with community residents. After the Army BRAC property transfers, the RAB would like to continue meeting to oversee remediation of the North Antenna Field, Landfill 26, and the Coastal Salt Marsh, which could last up to two years.

Forming Technical Review Committee

The RAB formed a subgroup to review technical documents. The first documents that the subgroup is reviewing are the Risk Assessment and the Focused Feasibility Study. Both of the documents are available for public review at the following locations:

Novato Library, 1720 Novato Blvd.
Tel: 415-897-1141

BRAC Field Office, Hamilton Army Airfield
Tel: 415-883-6386

Please call the sites to confirm hours.

Upcoming Meetings

The next **RAB Meeting** will be held at the Novato Police Department.

- August 15, 2001, 7 p.m.

For More Information

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Information Repositories

Marin County Public Library, Novato Branch
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tel: 415.883.6386
Call for Access

www.spk.usace.army.mil/cespk-pm/haaf/rab/rab.html

www.efds.w.navy.mil/Environmental/Novato.htm

HAAF ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

HAMILTON ARMY AIRFIELD

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PUBLIC ATTENDANCE AT RAB SOARS!

RAB ADDRESSES
PUBLIC CONCERN
OVER MTBE AND
METHANE



Approximately 100 members of the public attended the March 28th and May 16th RAB meetings to listen to presentations and to ask questions. The discussion at both meetings centered on concerns related to the MTBE plume at the former gas station on C Street, and the presence of methane at Landfill 26, adjacent to houses now under construction by Shea Homes. This issue of Environmental News is devoted to the questions posed by members of the public and the answers provided at the last two RAB meetings.

MTBE PLUME

Q: Are the gasoline storage tanks still there or have they been removed?

A: The tanks were removed in 1995 and 1996.

Q: How can you be sure where the edge of the plume is?

A: The Navy installed 76 groundwater monitoring wells around the former gas station. The wells are used to determine where the level of MTBE in the groundwater becomes detectable, i.e., one part per billion (ppb). The outer limit of the plume shown in Figure 1 is determined by the locations of wells where readings of 1 ppb or less were obtained. The concentration of MTBE in the groundwater generally increases as you move closer to where the storage tanks were originally located.

The Navy regularly monitors the groundwater wells and provides a quarterly report on the situation to the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The RWQCB uses the reports to monitor the plume and to determine whether additional action needs to be taken.

Q: My kids walk to school down C Street. Are they breathing in MTBE vapors during their walk to school?

A: No. The soil and groundwater contamination is well below the ground surface and does not rise up to become vapors that can affect pedestrians or children playing in the area.