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RABNEWSLETTER

Your official community voice for the clean-up of the former Titan 1-A missile site

New USACE team to lead cleanup of former missile site

By Sandi Dolbee
RAB community member

The new year brought some new faces to the leadership team in charge of overseeing the cleanup of contamination at Lincoln's former missile site.

Linda Mercurio, a project management professional and an environmental engineer with more than 25 years of experience, has been named the interim project manager by the USACE. Mercurio will take the lead while project manager Tim Crummett is on extended leave to temporarily shift his focus to a personal matter.

Linda Mercurio, left, and Maj. Kara Greene

She took over shortly after the Remedial Investigation Report was being finalized and as the next phase toward coming up with a plan of action is about to begin.

"I am excited to work with the team to move the Feasibility Study forward and engaging with the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) as the interim co-chair," Mercurio said. The Feasibility Study will look at the cleanup alternatives, along with the pros and cons, as well as the costs.

Charity Meakes, another USACE environmental engineer, will take over as technical lead from Matt Marlatt. Marlatt was recently promoted to be the Sacramento District manager for the Formerly Used Defense Sites Program. U.S. Army Maj. Kara Greene, who is with the USACE public affairs office, also joined the team.

In addition to the USACE, the RAB includes Robert Fagerness of the state Regional Water Quality Control Board and 11 community members appointed last March. We are supposed to hold quarterly public meetings. Unfortunately, the January meeting was canceled because key members necessary for a quorum were unable to attend. The community RAB met informally recently with the officials to get back on track and prepare for the next public meeting, set for 4-6 p.m. on April 24 in Presentation Hall at Kilaga Springs Lodge, 1167 Sun City Boulevard.

Meanwhile, the USACE work has continued, including finalizing the investigative process and ushering in the next phase: coming up with a remediation plan. The former missile site off Oak Tree Lane was home to three Titan 1-A surface-to-air missiles in the 1960s. In the 1990s, the groundwater was discovered to be contaminated with trichloroethylene (TCE), a chemical used for degreasing and cleaning. TCE is now a known human carcinogen.

You can see all the reports on the USACE website: https://www.spk.usace.army.mil/Missions/Military-Projects/FUDS/Titan-1-A-Missile-Site/ and the state Water Board's GeoTracker website: https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile_report.asp?global_id=T0606189198.

What's an 'RI' and why should you care?

By Gary Eckhardt
RAB community member

With the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on track to clean up trichloroethylene (TCE) contamination from Lincoln's Titan 1-A missile site, it's easy to get lost in the jargon and alphabet soup of acronyms. One of those is USACE's recently posted "Remedial Investigation (RI) Report." You may be asking, "What is an RI Report and why should I care?" A very good question! We will try to boil down the key messages and reasons for you

The RI report is the latest in a series of detailed documents you will see that will ultimately lead to the cleanup of TCE at the former missile site. The 2,000-plus page report has been a year in the making with contributions from numerous consultants, scientists, engineers and government agencies. It details recent site investigations coupled with reviews of more than 60 technical reports and 35 previous site investigations made throughout Titan 1-A's 60-plus year history.

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Why care about this new report

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No stone was left unturned in understanding the site's history, geology, hydrology, ecology, and cultural resources, along with the nature and extent of the TCE and other chemicals of concern. We should care about the RI report because it will serve as the ultimate reference document for decisions made about TCE cleanup actions, which will ultimately impact our community's health and environment. Let's start with a quick overview before diving into the details.

The report covers a study area of approximately 75 acres bordered by Sun City Lincoln Hills to the west, Ingram Slough to the south, a church and commercial property to the north and rural properties to the east. It is intersected by Oak Tree Lane and Ingram Slough flows along its southern border. The original Titan missile site, part of which currently serves as a Placer County maintenance facility, is a part of this study area. What remains is privately owned vacant land west of Oak Tree Lane zoned for future development and is the primary focus of the investigation due to the presence of TCE.

The report's centerpiece is a "conceptual site model" developed to assess the extent, location, exposure pathways and health impacts of TCE contamination. Most TCE is found in a groundwater layer mostly between 15 to 30 feet below the ground surface. It's concentrated in what is called a "plume" with the central portion of the plume located just east of the missile site. Extensions branch to the northwest and southwest and include the lowest concentrations of TCE. Just above is a soil layer also containing TCE vapor.

The main focus has been groundwater west of Oak Tree Lane as that is where most of the TCE contamination is, making it "ground zero" for the cleanup effort. The good news is the report finds no imminent risk to nearby residents as groundwater at the project location is not used as a water source. Regardless, USACE is taking their most conservative approach by considering all scenarios and remains committed to the clean up of TCE contamination in the groundwater

TCE in soil vapor is a different story. The vapor concentrations and chemical makeup found above the groundwater plume differ in their characteristics. In general, the southwest-central plume behaves as expected, but the soil vapor above the northwest plume running along Oak Tree Lane just south of St. Joseph Catholic Church has the highest concentrations of TCE and benzene. However, groundwater concentrations there are relatively low. This hints at a different source of contamination and a data gap that needs to be filled before a solid plan of action is implemented. USACE plans to address this as a separate project going forward to make sure it gets the focus it needs to find the best cleanup approach there.

Another potential concern identified is the possibility of another TCE migration pathway toward surface waters downstream due to trenches and discharge lines installed for an earlier pilot test. Based on current test data, this possibility is remote, but USACE plans to do more testing, field verification and appropriate abandonment if any issues are encountered.

While there are still a few loose ends to tie up, the report makes it clear there is more than enough information to proceed to the next steps in an effort to maintain the cleanup effort on schedule.

As RAB community members, it's part of our mission to read through these reports and try to sort out the key messages to share with our community. We hope we did our job for this report and stay tuned for future installments.

If you have any questions or comments please drop us an email at *rabtitan1a@sclhca.com****. Also, we are available to come speak to your group, club or neighbors. Just ask!*** **and we'll be there.**

Here's the latest schedule from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers of some of what's to come for this project.

Remedial Investigation Report — It's done and will be explained at the quarterly public RAB meeting, April 24, 4-6 p.m., Presentation Hall, Kilaga Springs Lodge, 1167 Sun City Blvd.
First semiannual 2024 Groundwater and Soil Vapor Report — It's done and will be discussed at the same meeting.
Field work — Workers will be on the scene from about late March through late May doing research for a Treatability Study. Expect to see crews in the area throughout that time.
Feasibility Study — A report looking at the alternatives for cleaning up the TCE is expected to be completed by early next year. It will be based on the findings of the Treatability Study.
Proposed Plan — Site Restoration Plan expected to be ready to be presented to the public in 2026.
Remedial Action — Site restoration expected to be completed by 2029, with monitoring to continue after that to ensure that the remediation was successfully accomplished.