



# California Regional Water Quality Control Board



Linda S. Adams  
Acting Secretary for  
Environmental Protection

## Lahontan Region

Edmund G. Brown, Jr  
Governor

Victorville Office

14440 Civic Drive, Suite 200, Victorville, California 92392  
(760) 241-6583 • Fax (760) 241-7308  
<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan>

February 22, 2011

To Interested Parties:

### CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD MEETING, MARCH 9 AND 10, 2011 IN BARSTOW, CALIFORNIA

#### **PROPOSED *Cleanup Program for Department of Defense Facilities — Accomplishments and Status — Informational Item***

Enclosed for your information is a copy of the proposed agenda item for your review. This is an Informational Item which will be presented at the **March 9 and 10, 2011**, meeting in Barstow, California.

If you need further information regarding this meeting, please contact our office.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Phillips  
Office Technician

Enclosures: Item No. 6  
Agenda Announcement

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
LAHONTAN REGION**

**MEETING OF MARCH 9 - 10, 2011  
BARSTOW, CALIFORNIA**

**ITEM:** 6

**SUBJECT:** **CLEANUP PROGRAM FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
FACILITIES — ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND STATUS —  
INFORMATIONAL ITEM**

**CHRONOLOGY:** This is the first Department of Defense program review. The Water Board has previously considered numerous Records of Decision.

**ISSUE:** The purpose of this information item is to describe the Department of Defense cleanup program, how we provide oversight of these federal facilities, policy considerations that arise, and program goals and accomplishments.

**DISCUSSION:** The purpose of the Department of Defense cleanup program is to investigate and cleanup soil and groundwater contaminants on active and former military bases. Federal funds for this program are used to: (1) investigate and clean up sites and (2) fund state regulatory oversight. The Water Board's role is to ensure cleanup decisions comply with Water Quality Control Plans (Basin Plans) and other state requirements and policies.

Because most remedies involve decisions regarding waste disposal and groundwater degradation, Water Board staff prepares a summary of the military's proposed decision document, called a Record of Decision, or ROD, for Water Board consideration at a public meeting. Water Board staff provide a recommendation whether state water quality requirements are met. The Water Board considers whether to adopt a Resolution authorizing the Executive Officer to sign the decision document.

**Lahontan Region Military Facilities**

Within the Lahontan region there are 12 Air Force, Army, and Navy bases and Formerly Used Defense Sites as shown on Enclosure 1 (Locations of Region 6 Military Facilities). These Formerly Used Defense Sites are bases closed after World War II in the 1950s with cleanup managed by the Army Corps of Engineers. Cleanup at the active bases is overseen by the base environmental office. Two bases (former George AFB and portions of Sierra Army Depot) were closed or partially closed as part of Base Re-Alignment and Closure (late 1980's through mid 1990's) and have land transfer and re-use issues along with soil and groundwater cleanup

06-0001

requirements. Cleanup of closed bases is handled by the military branch of the base. The military has conducted investigations to identify the contaminated areas, known as individual cleanup sites on each base.

### **Individual Cleanup Sites**

There are a total of 997 military cleanup sites in the Lahontan Region, of which 144 are closed (14%) and 853 are open (86%). In addition, there are 272 military underground storage tank sites, of which 197 are closed (72%) and 75 are open (28%). The open sites are pending further investigation, cleanup or closure following technical site evaluation.

Because of the federal hazardous waste laws and petroleum exclusion, staff manages individual cleanup sites as follows.

- Sites containing hazardous waste constituents. For these sites, the military follows federal Superfund requirements established according to the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act, or CERCLA.
- Sites with petroleum released from underground storage tanks. These sites must comply with state underground storage tanks regulations.
- Sites not in the above categories, but still having a water quality threat. For example, groundwater pollution from nitrate. These sites must comply with state requirements for groundwater cleanup.

Individual cleanup sites fall into four broad categories as follows.

- Sites closed with No Further Action either by staff or in decision documents.
- Sites cleaned up within a relatively short time frame (e.g. less than 50 years) and then closed with No Further Action.
- Sites, such as landfills closed in place, with indefinite long-term monitoring required.
- Sites with free phase chlorinated solvents or petroleum hydrocarbons that may remain open for many centuries until water quality standards are attained.

Water Board staff use the State Board's Geotracker database to manage and track the status of individual cleanup sites. This database is publicly assessable at:

<http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>

Annual Performance Measures for the Department of Defense cleanup program and other Water Board programs are posted on the State Board web site at:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/about\\_us/performance\\_report/cleanup/](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/about_us/performance_report/cleanup/)

### **State Oversight for Federal Facilities**

The Water Board works with the military through a cooperative cost recovery agreement to oversee the investigation and remediation of water quality issues at active and former military bases. Like other contaminated sites, cleanup at various bases can range from simple underground petroleum storage tank cleanups to complex federal Superfund cleanups. Resources allocated to Region 6 staff range from 0 hours to 3200 hours per base per year, depending on the total available resources and the priority of work at each base for that year. Two bases, Edwards Air Force Base and George Air Force Base receive over one-half of the funding because of the large volume of contaminants at these bases. A total of 4.2 staff positions are allocated to the Lahontan Region this fiscal year for this program.

The State Water Board administers the state cost recovery program while the Regional Water Board provides regulatory oversight of military cleanup actions. The California Department of Toxic Substances Control administers the state cooperative cost recovery agreement with the military. Department of Toxics Substances Control is the lead state regulatory agency for some military bases and shares the lead with the Water Board for others. At two bases in the region (former George Air Force Base and Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center), the Water Board is the State lead agency. At the shared sites, the Department of Toxics Substances Control is responsible to evaluate human health and ecological risk and the Water Board evaluates water quality protection. The US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9 is the lead regulatory agency at federal Superfund sites.

### **Federal Cleanup Agreements**

At Superfund bases Federal Facility Agreements signed between the military branch, US Environmental Protection Agency, Regional Water Board and Department of Toxic Substances Control govern cleanup. Cleanup at non-superfund bases are overseen by the State only. Some, but not all, non-Superfund bases have signed Federal Facility – State Remediation Agreements between the military branch and the Regional Water Board and Department of Toxic Substances Control. All federal facilities prepare planning documents identifying site investigation and clean-up reports that

will be prepared. These planning documents become a part of the cooperative cost recovery agreement.

### **Water Board Role in Military Base Cleanup**

Upon entering these agreements regulatory agencies agreed to either rescind or withhold taking formal enforcement actions provided that cleanup proceeded according to the agreements. Each agreement has language that preserves the Water Board's right to take independent enforcement action for violations after exhausting the administrative procedures of the agreements. These agreements provide a Dispute Resolution process for the elevation of technical, policy, or legal disagreements. Additionally, by participating in the cost recovery program, regulatory agencies have agreed to withhold taking formal enforcement actions on military bases with no formal agreement or the Formerly Used Defense Sites administered by the Army Corps of Engineers. Individual bases with agreements are described in Enclosure 2 (Military Base Summaries - Active or Recently Closed Facilities).

These agreements govern the process for individual cleanup sites at each base that contain hazardous waste constituents. Federal regulations dictate cleanup at these sites follow strict step-by-step actions to characterize the waste, evaluate potential cleanup actions and receptor risks, select a final remedy (the Record of Decision), implement the remedy and monitor effectiveness, while providing for public involvement.

Early interim cleanup actions may be taken at any time. Additionally, sites deemed to have insignificant human or ecological risk or water quality threat may be closed by staff early in the process.

The federal cleanup process is focused on managing risk to human health and the environment. For groundwater cleanup sites, the federal process only requires cleanup to drinking water standards, which are numerical water quality objectives established in the Basin Plan. However, the Basin Plan also requires an evaluation of whether, and to what extent, water quality degradation should be allowed. Degradation results when contaminants are present above naturally occurring background levels, but less than numerical water quality objectives. Degradation evaluation is not part of the federal cleanup decision making process.

There is a federal requirement that cleanup actions must identify and comply with all substantive state or federal laws and regulations pertinent to the cleanup. The identified rules are known as Applicable or Relevant and Appropriate Requirements, or

ARARs. The military and state disagree that some California water quality requirements must be addressed for federal cleanup actions. This has led to numerous disagreements statewide and necessitated on-going discussions between the military and Water Boards. To this end, there has been difficulty in having the military acknowledge and address Water Board requirements (particularly groundwater degradation aspects). Water Board staff conduct an independent evaluation of whether a particular remedy meets Water Board requirements.

The Water Board is asked to provide concurrence that cleanup action for hazardous waste sites comply with state water quality requirements and authorize the Executive Officer to sign the Record of Decision. For these sites, the state's role is to concur, or not, with the remedy and the state's decision is non-discretionary. If the Water Board does not concur with a decision document at a base with an agreement, binding dispute resolution will be initiated to address that issue. If the Water Board does not concur with a cleanup action at a base with no agreement, non-binding dispute resolution will be initiated, followed by formal enforcement action, if necessary.

For non-hazardous waste sites subject to state requirements only, the Water Board is asked to provide acceptance that cleanup actions comply with state water quality requirements. These sites include contaminants such as nitrate, pesticides, and petroleum. Remedy acceptance for these sites is a discretionary decision subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Underground storage tank sites that released petroleum hydrocarbons are under either Water Board or local county regulatory oversight. State regulations apply to these sites. Acceptance of cleanup actions and case closure for underground storage tank sites is taken at the staff level in accordance with the underground storage tank case closure approach presented to the Water Board.

### **Policy Considerations for Decision Documents**

When the Water Board is asked to consider a decision document for concurrence with, or acceptance of, a remedy at a particular site(s) and determine whether to authorize the Executive Officer to sign a Record of Decision, the Water Board must consider policies and state requirements, including, but not limited to those listed below.

- State Board Resolution 92-49 (Policies and Procedures for Investigation and Cleanup and Abatement of Discharges Under Water Code Section 13304).
- State Board Resolution 68-16 (Statement of Policy with Respect to Maintaining High Quality of Waters in California).
- Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region,(Basin Plan).
- California Code of Regulations title 23, chapter 16 (underground storage tank regulations).
- California Code of Regulations title 27 (land disposal regulations).
- California Water Code.
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Particular policy questions that need to be evaluated include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Is the cleanup time frame reasonable?
- Is the remedy permanent?
- Do abatement actions require ongoing maintenance?
- Do groundwater cleanup levels attain background?
- If not, is it technologically or economically infeasible to attain background water quality?
- What is the lowest groundwater cleanup level that is technologically and economically achievable?
- Will cleanup levels attain at least the numerical water quality objectives and protect human health and beneficial uses?
- Will cleanup levels be attained at all points within a plume?
- Will some groundwater degradation be allowed to remain?
- If some degradation is appropriate, how much, to what extent, and for how long will degradation be allowed?
- For groundwater plumes, will migration occur or is the plume stable or receding?
- If plume migration occurs, will contaminant concentrations be less than water quality objections (e.g. not cause a further pollution to occur)?
- Will degradation not unreasonably affect beneficial uses, meet best practicable treatment or control, assure there is no pollution or nuisance, and be consistent with maximum benefit to people of the state?
- If a containment zone is proposed, has it been demonstrated to be unreasonable to achieve water quality objectives and satisfy other policy criteria?
- Will soil be cleaned to background levels, or at least to a level not posing a human health risk or threaten ground or surface waters?
- Are effluent limitations for direct discharges appropriate to protect beneficial uses?

- For landfills, are engineered alternative final covers appropriate and meet state requirements?
- Will Basin Plan prohibitions be violated?
- If so, are exemptions to prohibitions appropriate and meet Basin Plan requirements?
- Will sensitive receptors be protected?
- Will environmental effects of a cleanup remedy comply with the California Environmental Quality Act?

These questions are evaluated on a case-by-case basis for each proposed decision document. Water Board staff review work plans and cleanup proposals from the military and compare them to state requirements. Comments are provided to military for actions that may not comply with state requirements and recommendations are made for modifications to comply. In most cases, the military and staff resolve differences in an acceptable manner. Decision documents may address an individual site, or multiple sites. Individual site remedies range from active or passive remediation of large groundwater contaminant plumes, to landfills closed in place, to sites proposed for no further action.

Before a recommendation can be made to concur or accept a cleanup action, the action must comply with state requirements. If issues cannot be resolved, the Dispute Resolution process is invoked. When Water Board staff makes a recommendation to the Water Board authorizing the Executive Officer to sign a decision document, an accompanying staff report provides an evaluation of compliance with respect to the aforementioned state water quality requirements.

### **Program Successes**

Over the twenty years that the Department of Defense cleanup program has been active, a number of successes can be documented.

- Numerous interim remedial actions were completed prior to finalizing decision documents. This has resulted in streamlined remedies because substantial amounts of petroleum hydrocarbons and chlorinated solvents were removed early, also shortening overall clean-up time.
- Numerous innovative technology tests and evaluations for soil and groundwater cleanup were evaluated. The information obtained from these technologies has been applied throughout the western United States.
- Numerous facilities, previously adversely affecting the environment, have been removed or reconstructed eliminating sources of pollution.

- Numerous landfills have been closed, many with engineered alternative native soil covers and drainage controls employed along with monitoring to prevent further pollution.
- At Edwards AFB, horizontal wells have been installed to facilitate in-situ remediation of shallow groundwater. If successful, groundwater quality objectives should be attained within 20 years.
- At Edwards AFB, satisfactory justifications were made to establish two large containment zones covering many square miles.
- At Sierra Army Depot, groundwater polluted with explosives and chlorinated solvents is undergoing active in-situ remediation by injecting a dilute carbon source (molasses) to degrade pollutants.
- At George AFB and Sierra Army Depot, land transfers to private, state, or other federal entities have been completed or are in progress allowing inactive properties to be economically re-used and providing jobs and development opportunities for the community.

### **Program Issues**

As expected with a large, expensive cleanup program involving multiple entities and regulatory agencies, a number of issues are evident.

- The previous stated disagreement between the state and military over some state water quality requirements has consumed extensive resources to verify that particular cleanup actions comply with state requirements, without the military acknowledging a need to comply. To the extent possible, staff encourages the military to provide the analysis or documentation outside of the federal cleanup process to evaluate compliance with state requirements. Inclusion of agree-to-disagree language in decision documents preserves legal positions.
- Staff acknowledges that review of certain cleanup actions proposed by the military do not have timely review because of inadequate resources to complete all work. Staff prioritizes work related to higher risk sites first and also works to accommodate military priorities to address hazardous waste sites first. Staff review of backlogged reports is completed as resources allow.
- Staff acknowledges that normal agency turnover has occasionally resulted in a lack of consistent technical feedback on some issues and sometimes has resulted in less than timely comments on technical reports.
- Data entry and data management within the Geotracker database has recently improved, but still requires a large

resource commitment to address gaps in data validity so that accurate reports are generated.

- At George AFB, regulatory agencies are in informal dispute with the military regarding adequate land use control mechanisms to protect the public from drinking water from a chlorinated solvent plume that has migrated offsite beneath private property parcels.
- At China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station, regulatory agencies are in informal dispute with the military over acknowledging that Basin Plan water quality objectives must be attained for chlorinated solvents while acknowledging that changes to designated municipal groundwater beneficial uses should be considered.

### **Conclusion**

Since 1994, Lahontan Region military bases have completed 22 decision documents that address final remedies for numerous sites. The military plans to submit an additional 23 decision documents by year 2014. Staff anticipates the Water Board will be asked to consider these decision documents when submitted acknowledging that a number of factors (technical, policy, legal, and funding) often may delay submittals. Over the next one to two years, Water Board staff anticipates bringing about five decision documents to the Water Board for its consideration.

Region 6 has 4.2 staff positions total to support staff in both the South Lake Tahoe and Victorville offices to manage the Department of Defense cleanup program. Total dollars allocated for this year are \$455,000 for the program. A portion of this money is used to support travel expenses and contracts such as the lab contract and the student intern contract. State Board indicates funding will remain stable for the foreseeable future. Resources are adequate to manage the program at certain bases, but not adequate at all bases and Formerly Used Defense Sites. Water Board staff has focused primarily on the highest risk sites in support of the military scheduling goals.

Staff will continue working with the military to ensure that state water quality requirements are satisfied regardless of whether the military acknowledges those requirements with regard to the federal Superfund cleanup program.

The military has substantially identified all sites at individual facilities and is addressing the major groundwater impacts either through interim actions taken or final measures planned. Substantial amounts of pollutants were removed by actions taken to date. Cleanup, and the need for regulatory oversight, will continue

for many sites for decades. A select number of complex sites (e.g. chlorinated solvents in fractured bedrock or large pools of free product petroleum hydrocarbon) will remain for centuries with long term monitoring.

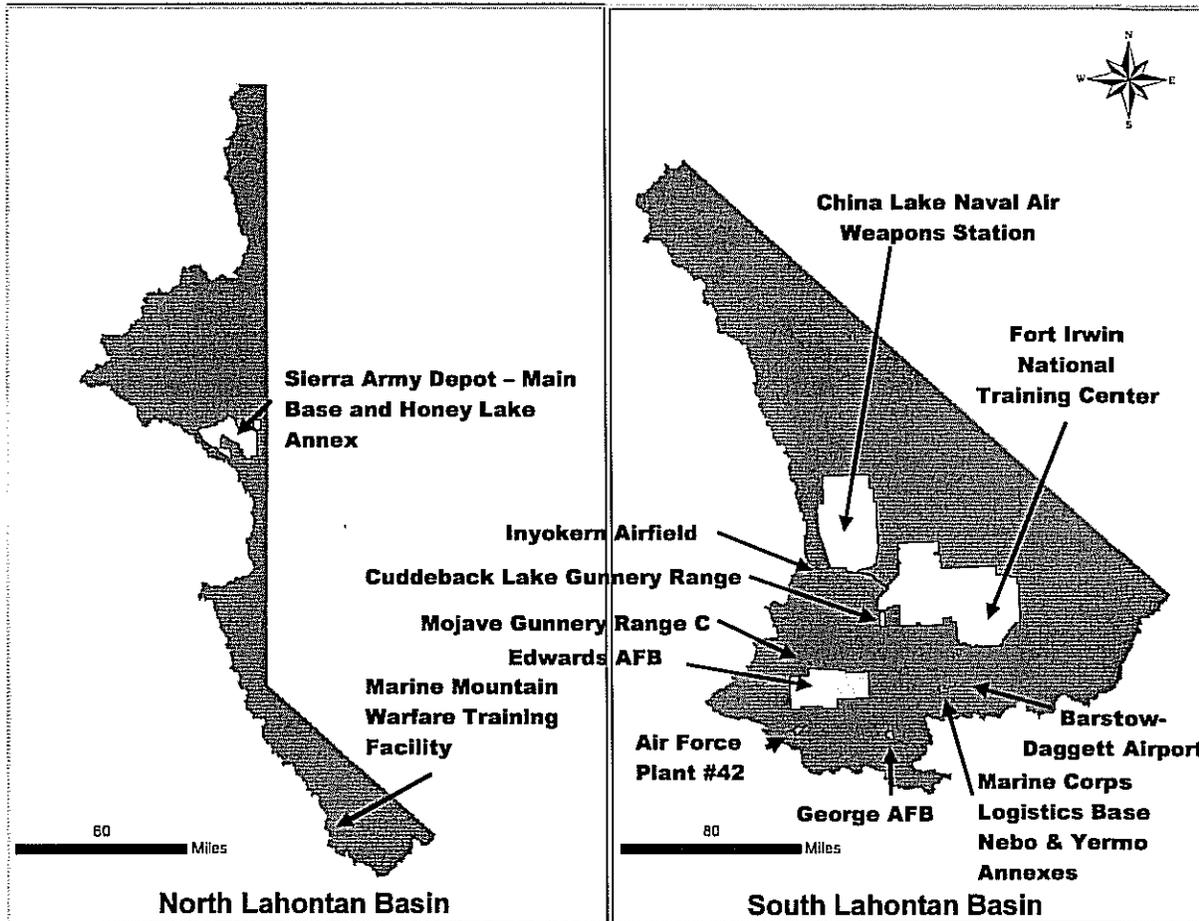
**RECOMMENDATION:** This is an informational item only. No formal action is requested. The Board may provide direction to staff regarding the Department of Defense cleanup program.

Enclosures: 

1. Locations of Region 6 Military Facilities
2. Individual Military Facility Summaries

JC/rp S/Board Orders 2011/DOD Program Status/DoD\_Cleanup\_Program GreenSheet (jwc 2011-02-17)

## ENCLOSURE 1 - Locations of Region 6 Military Facilities



Facility	Military Branch	Location	Size (Sq. Mi.)
Air Force Plant #42, Palmdale	Air Force	Palmdale	9.1
Edwards Air Force Base	Air Force	Lancaster	470.0
George Air Force Base	Air Force	Victorville	8.4
Fort Irwin	Army	Barstow	1,000.0
Sierra Army Depot	Army	Herlong	151.0
China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station	Navy	Ridgecrest	1,737.0
Marine Corps Logistics Base	Navy	Barstow	10.0
Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center	Navy	Bridgeport	71.9 (leased from USFS)
Barstow-Daggett Airport	Army COE*	Daggett	Not Available
Cuddeback Lake Gunnery Range	Army COE	Johannesburg	Not Available
Inyokern Airfield (Harvey Field)	Army COE	Inyokern	Not Available
Mojave Gunnery Range C	Army COE	Mojave	Not Available

**Notes:** Military Branch = The Army Corps of Engineers (COE) manages Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS)



## **ENCLOSURE 2 – Military Base Summaries - Active or Recently Closed Facilities**

**Air Force Plant 42** – Air Force Plant 42 is located in the south western portion of the Antelope Valley in Los Angeles County. The Air Force leases separate portions of the plant, called Plant Sites, to various independent contractors or agencies to develop, manufacture, maintain, and flight-test various aircraft. Five of the plant sites house contractor-operated aircraft assembly facilities. The three other plant sites are used for general administration, operations, maintenance, and warehouse activities. Two neighboring aircraft manufacturing facilities not owned by the Air Force also share use of the airfields at Air Force Plant 42.

- The Base is not on the federal Superfund list of contaminated sites.
- There is no cleanup agreement.
- Cleanup actions are negotiated every two years between the Base and regulatory agencies under the terms of the military cost recovery program.
- The Water Board and Department of Toxics Substances Control share state regulatory oversight responsibility.
- The Water Board is responsible for regulatory oversight of Military Underground Storage Tank sites.

**Edwards AFB** – Edwards AFB is located in the north central portion of the Antelope Valley in primarily Kern County, but also in Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties. It is the second largest base in the Air Force. The Base conducts, analyzes, and reports on flight and ground testing of aircraft, weapons systems, software and components as well as modeling and simulation. The three core components for this mission are: flying operations, maintenance, and engineering.

- The Base is on the federal Superfund list of contaminated sites.
- There is a Federal Facility Agreement (effective September 1990).
- Cleanup actions are negotiated every two years between the Base and regulatory agencies under the terms of this agreement and the military cost recovery program.
- The Water Board and Department of Toxics Substances Control share state regulatory oversight responsibility for Military Cleanup Sites.
- The US Environmental Protection Agency provides federal regulatory oversight.
- Kern County is responsible for regulatory oversight of Military Underground Storage Tank sites.

**George AFB** – Former George AFB is located on the western bluffs of the Mojave River in San Bernardino County. It was a tactical fighter training base. The base closed in 1992 as part of Base Re-Alignment and Closure. The airfield was re-opened by the City of Victorville and is known as Southern California Logistics Airport. To date about 75% of former federal land is transferred to private ownership, with the remainder leased to the City of Victorville or transferred to the US Bureau of Prisons. Redevelopment continues with various aeronautical and commercial companies locating to the airport. The Air Force is responsible to continue cleanup of soil and groundwater resulting from military disposal actions.

- The Base is on the federal Superfund list of contaminated sites.
- There is a Federal Facility Agreement (effective September 1990, amended July 1991).
- Cleanup actions are negotiated every two years between Air Force staff and regulatory agencies under the terms of this agreement and the military cost recovery program.
- The Water Board is the only state agency with regulatory oversight responsibility for Military Cleanup Sites.
- The US Environmental Protection Agency provides federal regulatory oversight.

- The Water Board is responsible for regulatory oversight of Military Underground Storage Tank sites.

**Fort Irwin National Training Center** – The Base is located in San Bernardino County. The Base is used by the Army for military training including heavy mechanized vehicle maneuvers, gunnery training, and live fire exercises. Approximately 50 square miles is leased to NASA. Known as Goldstone Deep Space Complex, this area is used for deep space radio antennae and satellite tracking systems. Another two square miles is leased by the U.S. Air Force as a gunnery range. The Base improves unit readiness training by providing a unique atmosphere and environment for training at battalion force level.

- The Base is not on the federal Superfund list of contaminated sites.
- There is no cleanup agreement.
- Cleanup actions are negotiated every two years between the Base and regulatory agencies under the terms of the military cost recovery program.
- The Water Board and Department of Toxics Substances Control share state regulatory oversight responsibility for Military Cleanup Sites.
- The Water Board is responsible for regulatory oversight of Military Underground Storage Tank sites.

**Sierra Army Depot** – The Base is located in the western portion of Honey Lake Valley in Lassen County. In 1995, under the Base Realignment and Closure Act, 92 square miles (mainly Honey Lake) was transferred to private or state public ownership. The Base now comprises the Main Depot (53 square miles) and the Upper Burning Ground (6 square miles). The Base provides world-wide logistics support to the Army in the form of maintenance, assembly, containerization and rapid shipment of critical operational project stocks for deployable medical systems, medical supplies, petroleum and water systems, and aviation systems. It receives, repairs, and recycles damaged war fighting material and stores munitions.

- The Base is not on the federal Superfund list of contaminated sites.
- There is a Federal Facility – State Remediation Agreement (effective May 1991).
- Cleanup actions are negotiated every two years between the Base and regulatory agencies under the terms of the military cost recovery program.
- The Water Board and Department of Toxics Substances Control share state regulatory oversight responsibility for Military Cleanup Sites.
- The Water Board is responsible for regulatory oversight of Military Underground Storage Tank sites.

**China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station** – The Base is located in the northwestern Mojave Desert in Kern, Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties. The Base's mission is to support research, testing and evaluation missions to provide cutting-edge weapons systems to our military personnel.

- The Base is not on the federal Superfund list of contaminated sites.
- There is a Federal Facility – State Remediation Agreement (effective November 2003).
- Cleanup actions are negotiated annually between the Base and regulatory agencies under the terms of this agreement and the military cost recovery program.
- The Water Board and Department of Toxics Substances Control share state regulatory agency responsibility for Military Cleanup Sites.
- The Water Board and Kern County are responsible for regulatory oversight of Military Underground Storage Tank sites.

**Marine Corps Logistics Base** – The Base is located in San Bernardino County and comprises three principal sites: Nebo Annex, Yermo Annex, and the Firing Range. Its mission is to rebuild and repair ground-combat-support equipment and to support installations on the West Coast of the United States.

- The Base is on the federal Superfund list of contaminated sites.
- There is a Federal Facility Agreement (effective October 1990).
- Cleanup actions are negotiated annually between the Base and regulatory agencies under the terms of this agreement and the military cost recovery program.
- The Water Board and Department of Toxics Substances Control share state regulatory oversight responsibility for Military Cleanup Sites.
- The US Environmental Protection Agency provides federal regulatory oversight.
- The Water Board is responsible for regulatory oversight of Military Underground Storage Tank sites.

**Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Facility** – The Base is located in the eastern Sierra Mountains in Mono County on land leased from the United States Forest Service. Its mission is to train forces for operations in mountainous, high altitude and cold weather environments. The Base also develops war fighting doctrine and specialized equipment for use in mountain and cold weather operations.

- The Base is not on the federal Superfund list of contaminated sites.
- There is no cleanup agreement.
- Cleanup actions are negotiated annually between the Base and Water Board under the terms of the military cost recovery program.
- The Water Board has state regulatory oversight responsibility for Military Cleanup Sites.
- The Water Board is responsible for regulatory oversight of Military Underground Storage Tank sites.