Environmental Justice at Military Superfund Sites

The Former Fort Ord: A Case Study

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The Fort Ord Environmental Justice Network (FOEJN)

- The Fort Ord Environmental Justice Network (FOEJN) was formed in 1995, as an outgrowth of community concerns over the cleanup and reuse efforts of the former Fort Ord Army Base.

- Fort Ord is one such site, which is in a highly populated area, as large as the City of San Francisco in Acreage.

- USEPA has proclaimed Fort Ord as the second most contaminated facility in US.
Environmental Justice: A Brief History

- 1982: Captured national attention when a demonstration took place against a hazardous waste landfill in Warren County, North Carolina, a county comprised predominately of African-Americans.

- 1994: President Clinton issued an Executive Order (SB 12898) requiring government at all levels to achieve environmental justice by addressing disproportionately high and adverse environmental health & economic effects on people of color and low-income populations.

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision making processes.
Fort Ord, Monterey Bay California
History of Fort Ord

- Established in 1917 and was closed in 1994
- Fort Ord was a training ground for soldiers preparing to serve in WW1, WW2, Korean, Viet Nam Wars, Persian Gulf, Operation Just Cause and other military actions.
- All 28,000 acres of the former Fort Ord were added to the National Priorities List (Superfund) in 1990 fence-line to fence-line
On Going Clean Up Concerns
Community Health

Ground Water Contamination

- Organic contaminants such as trichloroethene (TCE) are present in 3 plumes that run through 2 aquifers, primarily as a result of landfilling and other Army activities.

Air Pollution

- Prescribed burns have exposed local communities to dioxins and respiratory irritants and escaped the control of the Army, further endangering citizens

Soil Contamination

- Lead, copper, and antimony contaminate small arms ranges across the base. Shell casings litter the beaches and in some areas cover greater than 10% of the ground surface. Peeling lead paint from buildings also contribute to the problem
Munitions and Explosives of Concern
Out of Control Burns, 2003

**Health Effects**

- Asthma
- Cancer
- Coughing
- Respiratory distress, chest pains
- Rashes
- Dioxin exposure
- Burning eyes
- Mucus build-up
Landfills and Groundwater

- Multiple landfills were combined into a 150+ acre landfill with no liner
- (VOC) volatile organic compounds such as PCE and TCE are leaking from the landfill site contaminating groundwater
- 2 other groundwater plumes resulting from Army activities have been discovered on base
- Plumes have migrated outside the Fort Ord Boundaries
Soil Contamination

- Small arms training was conducted during the entire time the base was operational
- Some ranges literally covered with spent shells
- Has resulted in extreme concentrations of lead, copper, and antimony in on base soils
- Cleanup efforts have been largely unsuccessful
The Economics of Environmental Injustice

Communities around Fort Ord are composed of predominately low income residents and people of color—falls under the EJ Executive Order BUT:

- The community has not been engaged during reuse planning
- Proposed development centered on high income uses (expensive housing, golf courses, etc)
- Local contractors not being used for onsite work
- The proposed reuse of the base benefits those impacted by its contamination the least
Keys to Economic Revitalization

- Affordable Housing
- Small Business Development
- Meaningful Job Creation
- Sustainable economic and community development

- All will help maintain community character and benefit local residents
Ongoing Community Challenges At Federal Facilities

- Meeting the basic needs of the community, according to Environmental Justice Regulations, SB12898
- Availability of safe and affordable housing
- Livable wage job development & training for impacted local residents
- Lack of resources
- Lack of affordable medical facilities
The Need for Environmental Health Clinics

- FOEJN believes that an environmental health center & clinic should take priority at all military and Superfund sites.
- FOEJN is working to establish such a Facility at Fort Ord.
Priorities for 2007

● FOEJN continues to stress the importance of implementing the rules and intent of the Environmental Justice Resolution SB12898.

● DOD, USEPA, State agencies, Local government, Universities should incorporate the Principles of environmental justice with a plan to implement the resolution.

● Develop legislation to give Constitutional strength to SB12898.
FOEJN is a 501c non-profit organization
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