

SALTON SEA TEST BASE



FACT SHEET

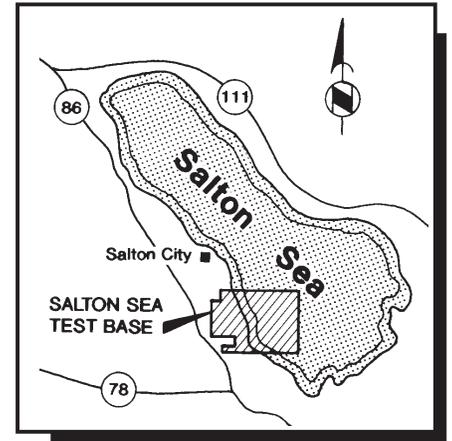
SOUTHWEST DIVISION NAVAL FACILITIES ENGINEERING COMMAND

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

INTRODUCTION

This fact sheet is eighth in a monthly series designed to keep the local community and interested public up to date on the U.S. Navy's Installation Restoration Program underway at the Salton Sea Test Base (SSTB). The investigation and cleanup at the base began approximately three and a half years ago and is nearing completion. This fact sheet provides an overview of the most recent study conducted at three

SSTB Installation Restoration Program sites located in the Salton Sea. It provides a summary of the histories of the sites, the investigations conducted at each, and recommendations for no further action. The results of this study can be found in the Draft Addendum to the Removal Site Evaluation Report dated August 1996. This document and other program-related documents are available at the information repositories listed on the back of this fact sheet.



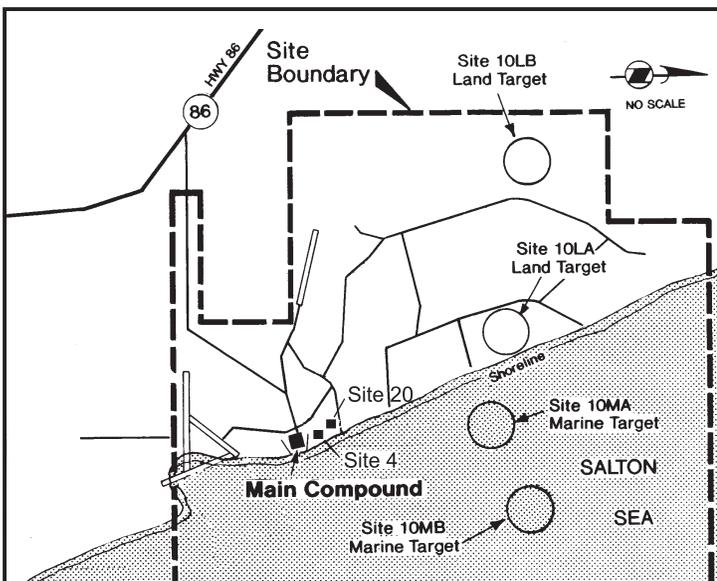
Sediment Study at SSTB

A sediment study was conducted to assess potential contamination from previous base activities at sites located underwater in the Salton Sea. Any base-related contamination to the Salton Sea is expected to result from contamination of sediments. Sites included in this study were:

- Site 4, Shoreline Disposal Area
- Site 10, Aeroballistic Targets:
 - Submerged portion of Site 10LA, Old Aeroballistic Land Target
 - Site 10MA, Old Aeroballistic Marine Target
 - Site 10MB, New Aeroballistic Marine Target
- Site 20, Imhoff Tank

from the area were taken in 1995. However, the composition, location, and extent of submerged debris was not fully evaluated. Therefore, additional sediment samples were taken and analyzed during the recent study to further assess the extent of the debris and whether there were any related contaminants that could cause a significant risk to human health and/or the environment.

Analysis of Site 4 sediment data showed elevated levels of some contaminants, but not at levels causing significant risk. Some contaminants were associated with submerged asphalt pavement. Other identified contaminants were consistent with those found throughout the Salton Sea. Based on this information, no further action has been recommended for Site 4.



The study included a geophysical survey, and sediment sampling and laboratory analysis. A geophysical survey was conducted at Site 10 targets to detect the presence of any debris from aeroballistic test drops in the sediment of the Salton Sea. Sediment sampling and analysis were conducted to evaluate whether contaminants related to activities associated with each site have impacted the surrounding sediment. Because past activities were different at each site, samples were analyzed for different potential contaminants. These "contaminants of potential concern" are site-specific and are discussed below.

Site 4: Shoreline Disposal Area

The Shoreline Disposal Area was reportedly used intermittently to dispose of kitchen and office wastes between the late 1940s and mid-1970s. Scrap metal, pipes, metal frames, reinforced concrete rubble, and telephone poles were visible on the shore of the Salton Sea. This surface debris was removed, and sediment samples

Site 10: Aeroballistic Targets

From the mid-1940s through approximately 1960, two land and two marine targets were used to support aeroballistic testing of inert, non-explosive atomic weapon units at SSTB. Aeroballistic testing consisted of dropping dummy weapons constructed in the shape of real weapons, but filled with concrete, lead, steel, or other dense, non-explosive materials (for ballast), to see how various shapes performed in flight. These drops also assessed the operation of fusing and firing mechanisms as the test unit fell toward the target. Batteries were reportedly used in the units to power the fusing and firing mechanisms.

In 1960 and 1961, Navy scuba divers conducted salvage operations to remove "classified" test unit shapes from the Site 10 marine targets. Other debris from the test drops were left in place at these two locations. A portion of one of the land targets now lies under water due to the rising level of the Salton Sea. Test units at the land targets were normally recovered after each drop, except in cases where they were imbedded too deeply in ground to be readily retrieved.

Results and Recommendations

During the previous Site Investigation (March 1995 fact sheet), geophysical surveys, and sediment sampling and analysis were conducted at the submerged target locations. More data were needed to further assess potential contamination of sediments at these sites. As a result, additional geophysical survey and sampling and analysis was conducted during the current study. Due to the use of nickel, cadmium, and lead in batteries, these contaminants are of particular concern at these sites. Based on community concern and regulatory agency request, uranium was also considered during the study, even though it is not suspected to be a likely contaminant.

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Results of sediment analysis from Site 10 indicated that nickel, cadmium, and lead were present at levels above background (that which occurs naturally), but at concentrations posing no threat to human health or the environment. Uranium was detected at levels consistent with those found throughout the Salton Sea, which are related to inflow from other sources (e.g., agricultural drainages). Based on this information, no further action has been recommended for the marine portions of Site 10.

Site 20: Imhoff Tank

The Imhoff Tank was a settling tank for sewage from all buildings in the main compound of SSTB during the 1940s. Any contaminants generated from the buildings and poured down the drains would have ended up in the tank, which acted as a

digester for organic materials. Liquid waste was regularly drained off the top directly into the Salton Sea and sludges would have been intermittently removed from the bottom of the tank.

The Imhoff Tank was closed in place (filled with gravel) in 1995, in accordance with Imperial County requirements for septic tanks. Sediment sampling and analysis was conducted during the current study to confirm that the release of liquids and/or sludges from the tank did not cause contamination to the sediments seaward of the tank. At Site 20, contamination from pesticides was detected. Pesticide levels were consistent with those found throughout the Salton Sea, and are consistent with inflow from other sources. Based on this information, no further action has been recommended at Site 20. ■

RAB Update

The SSTB Restoration Advisory Board met last on 23 October 1996, at a community workshop designed to help explain the latest comprehensive documents pertaining to the environmental cleanup at the base, the Draft Removal Site Evaluation Report and its addendum. The workshop was very informative and well-attended. The next RAB meeting will be held in mid-January 1997. A specific date will be announced later.

Happy Holidays, from the SSTB Project Team!

Information Repositories for the SSTB cleanup project have been established at two locations in the area so that the local community has the opportunity to review project documents and reports:

Salton City Library

2098 Frontage Road (Hwy 86)
Salton City, CA (619) 394-4446

Hours: Mon-Wed-Fri
8:00 AM - NOON
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Spencer Library Media Center

Imperial Valley College, Aten Road/Hwy 111
Imperial, CA (619) 355-6377

Hours: Mon-Thur: 8:00 AM - 9:00 PM
Fri: 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Sat: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
(except holidays)

In addition, documents, reports, and Restoration Advisory Board meeting minutes and agendas are available at the reading room of the Salton City Spa and RV Park in Salton City. Please contact Ms. Shirley Lee Palmer at (619) 394-4333 for hours.

For More Information

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