

# SALTON SEA TEST BASE



# FACT SHEET

SOUTHWEST DIVISION

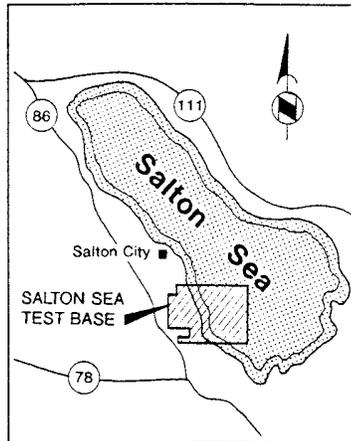
NAVAL FACILITIES ENGINEERING COMMAND

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

## Introduction and Overview

This fact sheet is the second in a series designed to inform local residents and other interested individuals of the U.S. Navy's plans for formally closing Salton Sea Test Base (SSTB). The Department of Defense (DoD) has designated SSTB for closure under the military Base Realignment and Closure program (BRAC). Before this can occur, environmental problems associated with the past use and disposal of hazardous materials and wastes at the base must be thoroughly investigated and, if necessary, remediated (cleaned up).

The Navy is required to meet specific standards and follow defined procedures during the base cleanup process. This involves implementation of the Installation Restoration (IR) Program, a comprehensive environmental program initiated by the



Navy to identify and investigate potentially hazardous sites at its facilities.

An important part of the cleanup process at SSTB is the involvement of community members. A community relations plan has been prepared and is being implemented to establish two-way communication.

Also, as part of the BRAC process, the Navy is establishing a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) at each closing or realigning base where property will be available for transfer to the community. The purpose of the RAB is to bring together and involve the community in the process of environmental restoration at SSTB.

This fact sheet provides a summary of information on the location and history of SSTB and the status of the base IR and other environmental programs. It also provides details on the BRAC program for the base closure and the RAB process that has been set up to encourage community involvement.

## Site Location and History

The SSTB is located in Imperial County about ten miles south of Salton City. It occupies approximately 7,945 acres of land and 13,642 acres of water in the southwest portion of Salton Sea. SSTB was established in 1942 as an operational base for seaplanes. The remoteness of the area was ideal for training and other operations.

Facilities at SSTB primarily included equipment utility buildings used for storage, repair, shelter, and testing of military arms and equipment. Over the years, the base was expanded and used for testing, research, and training maneuvers by the military and other tenants, including the Atomic Energy Commission and the Sandia Branch of Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory. SSTB is no longer in use and has been inactive since 1987. However, prior to the Gulf War, SSTB was used as a training site for Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The first fact sheet (October 1993) distributed to the public last fall provides greater detail on SSTB history and base operations. It is available at the information repositories (see inside).

## BRAC Program

The U.S. Navy is planning the closure and disposal of SSTB, in accordance with the Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1988 (BRAC I). The ultimate goal of closure of the base is to dispose of all property. This requires that environmental restoration programs be implemented to prepare the property for disposal and reuse.

## Restoration Advisory Board

A key element of the DoD guidance deals with improving public involvement

opportunities in the base cleanup program, including the establishment of a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) at each closing or realigning base where property will be available for transfer to the community. The RAB will replace the Technical Review Committee (TRC).

The RAB is an advisory body designed to act as a focal point for the exchange of information between the Navy and the local community. The RAB is intended to bring together community members who reflect diverse interests within the local community. This enables the early and continued two-way flow of information, concerns, values, and needs between the

affected community and the BRAC Cleanup Team (BCT). The RAB will work in partnership with the BCT on cleanup issues and related matters throughout each facility's cleanup and transition to civilian reuse.

In February of this year, applications for RAB membership were mailed out to the public, and over 20 people responded. RAB members will be asked to review and comment on technical documents relating to the ongoing environmental studies and cleanup activities at SSTB. All RAB meetings are open to the public, and meetings will be announced through flyers and the local newspapers.

# Environmental Program Status

The IR Program was initiated at SSTB in 1986 when a Preliminary Assessment (PA) was undertaken. The completed PA (September 1993) identified 23 sites. Information for the identification of these sites was obtained from historical records, interviews with former employees, and field surveys. The recently completed Environmental Baseline Survey (1994) identified two additional sites (Sites 24 and 25). Currently, a Site Inspection (SI) is in progress at SSTB. The SI includes studies of environmental contamination issues associated with most of the identified sites.

Underground storage tanks (USTs) were used to store various petroleum products. A UST removal project was implemented in November 1993. Fifteen tanks were removed and the surrounding soil was sampled. Initiation of site assessments is planned for fiscal year 1994. These sites will remain under part of the California UST compliance program in order to determine whether any past releases caused contamination of groundwater or soil.

There are areas of SSTB that have the potential to contain petroleum or other chemical contamination. Due to the demolition of most of the buildings, however, the potential threat from contaminants such as lead-based paint and asbestos has been removed. The entire electrical system at the base, including all known transformers, has also been removed. Thus, there is no potential threat of contamination from transformer fluid containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The BRAC Cleanup Plan addresses a total of 25 sites, some of which may require cleanup. These sites are briefly described and the locations shown on the maps in this fact sheet. More complete site-specific information is presented in the October 1993 SSTB fact sheet and in the BRAC Cleanup Plan, which is available in the information repositories.

## Site 1 - Taxiway Landfill

This area reportedly covers approximately 1,200 by 500 feet. Disposal may have included such items as ash and non-combustibles from a domestic trash incinerator, car batteries, construction debris including asbestos-containing material (ACM), and other wastes.

## Site 2 - USTs

This group includes USTs for gasoline, diesel, and fuel oil, with capacities ranging from 250 to 25,000 gallons.

## Site 3 - Abandoned Electrical Systems

Electrical transformers that remained after SSTB closed were vandalized

Site 3 Description, continued ▼

and transformer oils were spilled on the ground. All equipment containing hazardous fluids and 200 yards of contaminated soil were removed. Soil sampling indicated that remaining soils were free from PCB contamination. No further actions are planned for this site.

## Site 4 - Shoreline Disposal Area

Items reported to have been disposed of include household and office waste, construction debris, and other materials. Most of the site is underwater.

## Site 5 - Asbestos Hazards

ACM was used in most of the buildings constructed at the base, and asbestos hazards have been confirmed at various sites at SSTB. Asbestos abatement was performed by Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake in 1993 prior to building demolition.

## Site 6 - Instrument Laboratory Leach Line

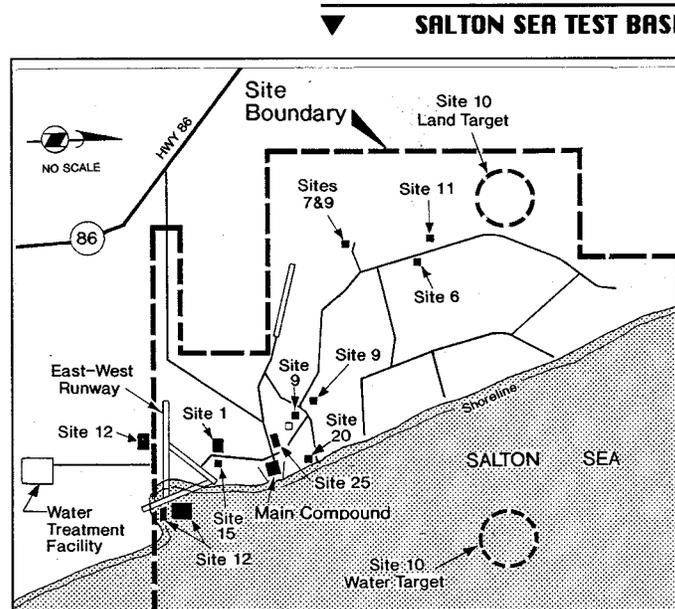
Wastes from photographic processing and battery reconditioning potentially were discharged through sinks to french drains and filtered into the soil. Wastes of concern include silver from photo processing and lead from batteries.

## Site 7 - Dog Site Leach Field

A sink in Building 4070 was possibly used to wash uranium-containing parts and equipment. Wash water may have leached into the septic system drain field soil. Wastes of concern include uranium residuals and nitro-based compounds from high explosives.

## Site 8 - Building 4055 Grease Pit

A concrete pit was used for working on vehicles. Wastes of concern include petroleum products.



### Site 9 - Buildings 4070, 4026, and 4027

Building 4070 was used for disassembly and assembly of weapons and prototypes, some of which may have contained uranium. Buildings 4026 and 4027 were storage bunkers for high explosives and atomic weapons, respectively. A radiation survey conducted during the PA found no elevated levels of radiation.

### Site 10 - SSTB Range

Prototype weapon drops were conducted at land and water targets. Not all of the test units were recovered. Some of these units may contain small amounts of uranium.

### Site 11 - Building 4033 Landfill

Trash generated in this building reportedly was buried in a landfill to the west of the building.

### Site 12 - East-West Runway Landfill

This site consists of three possible landfill areas near the main runway.

### Site 13 - Gully Landfill

Located south of the main compound, this landfill may contain such wastes as trash, batteries, fuel oil, engines, and other materials.

### Site 14 - Warehouse Landfill

Waste disposed of here may include trash generated by nearby buildings; specific contents are unknown.

### Site 15 - Paint Shop Building 4049

This building was used for paint storage; paint wastes and solvents may be present.

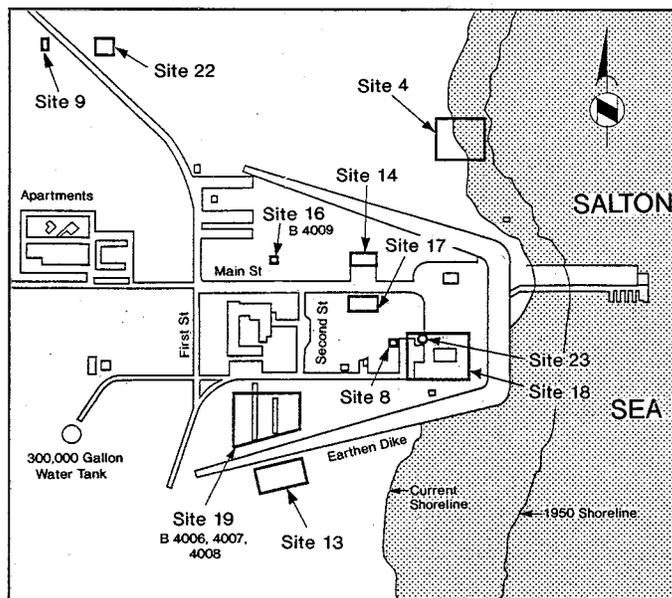
### Site 16 - Paint Shop Building 4009

This building was used for paint storage; paint wastes may be present.

### Site 17 - Vehicle Maintenance Old Building 5

This building has been demolished. It may have contained gasoline, diesel, oil, and solvents.

### ▼ SALTON SEA TEST BASE - MAIN COMPOUND



### Site 18 - Old Shop Buildings 3 and 4

These buildings have been demolished. Paints and other substances may have been disposed of on the ground around these buildings.

### Site 19 - Equipment Shed Bldgs. 4006, 4007, 4008, and 4050

This site includes four former equipment storage sheds and a car garage. Maintenance wastes associated with the use of heavy equipment potentially are present at this site.

### Site 20 - Imhoff Tank and Old Pump Station

In the 1940s an Imhoff tank located on the shore of the Salton Sea was used

### Site 20 Description, continued ▼

for sewage disposal. Sewage from the compound was pumped to this tank. The old pump station was abandoned in the early 1950s during construction of the dike. Any contaminants generated by the shops and discharged into the sewer would have been collected in the tank. Liquids from the Imhoff tank were discharged directly to the Salton Sea. The means of disposal of sludge from the tank is unknown (the correct location is shown on the current figure).

### Site 21 - Oiled Roads

Waste oil and grease were used in road pavement at SSTB and for dust control on dirt roads.

### Site 22 - Old Small Arms Range

A skeet and shotgun range may contain old live rounds or other metal debris.

### Site 23 - Septic Tanks

Hazardous materials such as solvents and hydrocarbons may have been poured down drains. These materials would have been collected in the septic tanks and/or discharged to the septic tank leach fields.

### Site 24 - Potential Impact Area

These areas are dispersed throughout the base and have the potential to contain both expended and unexploded ordnance.

### Site 25 - Main Compound Area Leach Field

The sewage system serving the main compound consisted of gravity sewer lines to a septic tank. Effluent was then pumped from the tank to the main compound area leach field.

# Environmental Programs at Salton Sea Test Base

The environmental restoration and compliance programs at SSTB have been developed to comply with all necessary regulations, including the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) of 1980, the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986, and other applicable laws. CERCLA and SARA established a series of programs for the cleanup of hazardous waste disposal and spill sites nationwide.

## Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP)

DERP is a law, separate from CERCLA, which was enacted by SARA. It is analogous to EPA's "Superfund" but is broader. DERP emphasizes the identification, investigation, and cleanup of contamination from hazardous substances, pollutants, and contaminants under CERCLA;

correction of other environmental damage, such as unexploded ordnance detection and disposal; demolition and removal of unsafe buildings, structures, and debris; and improvements to DoD hazardous waste operations. DERP requires that hazardous substance, pollutant, and contaminant investigations and cleanups be conducted in accordance with CERCLA'S federal facility section. The latter requires that such DoD facilities investigate and remediate sites to the same degree as if they were privately owned. The Navy calls its version of DERP the Installation Restoration (IR) Program.

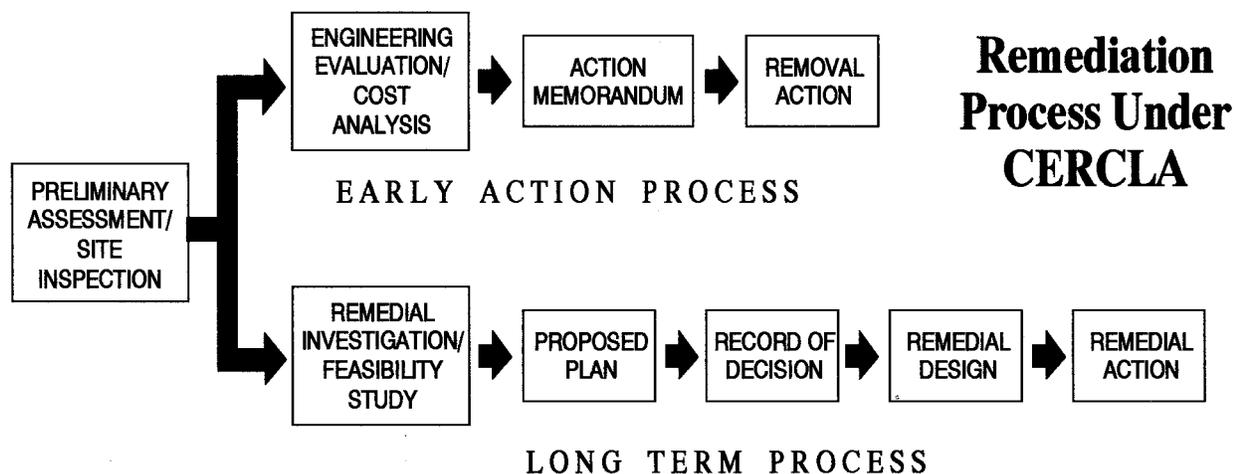
## Installation Restoration (IR) Program

In 1980 the DoD initially established the IR Program to comply with CERCLA guidelines. The IR Program at SSTB is being managed by the Southwest Division of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command in San

Diego. A detailed discussion of the IR Program process and steps was presented in the October 1993 SSTB fact sheet. Briefly, the steps are as follows:

- Preliminary Assessment/Site Inspection (PA/SI)
- Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS)
- Preferred Alternative/Proposed Plan
- Record of Decision
- Remedial Design/Remedial Action (RD/RA)
- Post-Project Activities

During the PA/SI, potential sites of hazardous waste contamination are discovered and verified. The next phase is the RI/FS, when site investigations are conducted (RI) and cleanup solutions are developed (FS). At the point following the PA/SI, the option exists to pursue an "Early Action Process". As shown in the figure below, this Early Action Process focuses and expedites the investigation process and allows work to proceed more quickly to removal action.



---

# FURTHER COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

---

As part of the IR Program process, a Community Relations Plan was prepared in December 1993. It is based on the community concerns and interests identified through interviews conducted the previous summer with community members, local officials, and other interested individuals. The community relations program is designed to establish two-way communication between the Navy and all individuals interested in the environmental cleanup at the base. This program will operate along with the RAB process.

---

**Information Repositories** for the SSTB cleanup project are being established at two locations in the area so that the local community will have an opportunity to review project documents and reports:

**Salton City Library**  
2098 Frontage Rd. (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 Rd./Hwy 111  
Imperial, CA  
(619) 355-6377

Hours: Mon-Fri  
7:30 am - 4:30 pm  
(May 23 - Jun 17)  
Mon - Thur: 7:30 am - 7:00 pm  
Fri : 7:30 am - 4:30 pm  
(Jun 20 - Jul 22)

---

## For More Information

**Mike Radecki**  
Remedial Project Manager  
Southwest Division  
Naval Facilities Engineering Command  
1220 Pacific Highway, Code 1832.MR  
San Diego, CA 92132-5190  
(619) 532-2450

**Celeste Albanez**  
Public Participation Specialist  
Department of Toxic Substances  
Control  
245 West Broadway, Suite 425  
Long Beach, CA 90802  
(310) 590-5561



**SALTON SEA  
TEST BASE**

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
CLEANUP**

**MAILING LIST**

**Yes**, I would like to receive future information on the environmental cleanup at the Salton Sea Test Base. Please ADD my name and address to the mailing list.

**No**, I do not wish to receive future information. Please DELETE my name and address from the mailing list.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please clip this coupon and return to:

**Mike Radecki**

Remedial Project Manager, Southwest Division Naval Facilities Engineering Command  
1220 Pacific Highway, Code 1832.MR, San Diego, CA 92132-5190

---