

SALTON SEA TEST BASE

SOUTHWEST DIVISION NAVAL FACILITIES ENGINEERING COMMAND



FACT SHEET

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

INTRODUCTION

This is the third in a newly designed series of monthly fact sheets aimed at providing brief, understandable information on current activities related to the Navy's Installation Restoration Program at the Salton Sea Test Base (SSTB). This fact sheet presents general information on the natural resources typical of the Salton Sea Basin, their occurrence at SSTB, and related impact on the cleanup. Natural resources are products of the earth, such as water, minerals, plants, animals, etc., that may be used or enjoyed by humans.

Resources of geological significance in the Salton Sea Basin include minerals and geothermal energy. There are no known sources of desirable minerals on SSTB and no mining has occurred or is planned. Although no production of geothermal energy is conducted at the base, geothermal energy is being developed along the southeastern end of the Salton Sea, approximately 15 miles from the base.

The area surrounding the SSTB contains a variety of ecological resources, including various associations of desert and shoreline plants, and the Salton Sea. There are two major ecosystems at SSTB: a terrestrial; or land-based, ecosystem; and an aquatic, or water-based, ecosystem (the Salton Sea). An ecosystem can be defined as an environmental system inhabited by interacting living creatures. ■

NATURAL RESOURCES AT SSTB

The terrestrial vegetation types at SSTB include non-native (planted) species in developed areas, natural vegetation communities of the Lower Colorado Desert, and shoreline vegetation communities. The most common terrestrial habitat throughout the Salton Sea Basin at SSTB is Desert Scrub, which is predominantly creosote bush and bursage.

Extensive active desert dunes are present in the southeast corner of SSTB. Some of these dunes are over 20 feet high and cover several acres. Vegetation covers less than 25% of the dunes, but they have become relatively stable and have not been seriously affected by off-road vehicles or military activities. The sand dunes are home for two reptile species: the fringe-toed lizard and the flat-tailed horned lizard. The fringe-toed lizard is listed in California as a Species of Special Concern because of its threatened habitat. The flat-tailed horned lizard is proposed for federal listing as a Threatened Species.

More than 370 types of birds have been recorded at the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge located just southeast of SSTB. The refuge is primarily a feeding and resting area for migratory waterfowl which winter at the Salton Sea. Threatened or endangered bird species known to occur seasonally in the Salton Sea Basin include the California brown pelican, the American peregrine falcon, the bald eagle, and the Yuma clapper rail. California Species of Special Concern include Le Conte's thrasher and the gull-billed tern.

Approximately 40 percent of SSTB lies within the Salton Sea. The Sea was formed as a result of human activities when a series of floods, resulting from improperly protected floodgates, eroded the channels of the Colorado River and diverted the water flow into the Salton Sea Basin. The occurrence of aquatic wildlife in the Salton Sea is limited to specialized organisms because of high summer water temperatures of up to 97 degrees Fahrenheit, a shifting shoreline, and a salt content approximately 25% higher than sea water. Most fish and other organisms introduced to the sea, intentionally and accidentally, have been unable to survive. The only aquatic plant existing in the Salton Sea is shoal grass which was introduced as food for waterfowl in the 1960s. There are also macroscopic organisms (those which are visible to the naked eye), including algae and phytoplankton, which provide food for fish and birds.

An ecological risk screening was conducted for chemicals that have been detected in soils at SSTB. The purpose of the ecological risk screening was to identify areas at the base where particular contaminants may pose a threat or have adverse effects on the species inhabiting the base. The ecological risk screening assessed reproductive success, growth, and survival of the representative species. This assessment appears as an appendix to the Final Removal Site Evaluation Report released this month. This document and other information on natural resources at SSTB are available for review at the information repositories listed on the back.

UPDATE

The SSTB Restoration Advisory Board will hold one more meeting before taking a break for the summer. The information repositories will be open during this time and will continue to be updated as needed. Activities taking place this summer include an unexploded ordnance investigation and clearance, and groundwater monitoring. In addition, two new wells will be installed near Site 12D, the off-base landfill, to monitor for contaminants in groundwater. A separate fact sheet on the ordnance clearance and related community activities will be released next month.

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

Mike Radecki

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

Jennifer Rich

Public Participation Specialist
Department of Toxic Substances
Control (DSC)
245 West Broadway, Suite 350
Long Beach, CA 90802-4444
(310) 590-4914

Shirley Lee Palmer

SSTB RAB Community Co-Chair
P.O.Box 5375 Salton City CA 92275
(619) 394-4333

MAILING LIST

Mike Radecki

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

- Please DELETE my name from the SSTB mailing list
- Please ADD my name to the SSTB mailing list

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Affiliation: _____

If you would like to either remove your name from or add your name to the SSTB mailing list, please fill out the coupon above and mail to the address shown.

Thank you!

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

Southwest Division
Naval Facilities Engineering Command
1220 Pacific Highway, Code 18
San Diego, CA 92132-5190

INSIDE:

*Information on natural resources
at the Salton Sea Test Base*