
Special Project
Adak Update

February 2000

Background Information

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Naval Air Facility Adak Selected for Closure

With passage of Public Laws 100-256 and 101-510 in 1988 and 1990, Congress created the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission to provide a fair process that would result in timely closure and realignment of military installations.

The former Naval Air Facility (NAF) Adak was selected for closure by the Commission in 1995. The military mission of the former Navy base ended in March 1997. Since that time the Navy has been involved in the environmental restoration, cleanup and closure activities that would allow for lease and transfer of property on Adak to non-federal entities.

Laws Governing Military Base Closure

Several federal laws set the standards and requirements for military base closure. Those laws require environmental restoration and set standards for site cleanup. Adak closure is governed by the Base Closure and Realignment Act (BRAC).

It is also governed by the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), as amended by the Community Environmental Response Facilitation Act (CERFA), and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) regulations contained in Public Law 18 AAC 75. CERCLA is also called the Superfund Law.

Property Disposal and Reuse Issues

All of Adak Island is part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. Navy use of approximately 77,000 acres on the northern half of the island was authorized by a public land withdrawal in 1959. When Navy use for military purposes is no longer needed, the only legally permissible action Navy may take to dispose of the property is to relinquish it back to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Under the Base Closure and Realignment Act program, the military mission at Naval Air Facility Adak ended on March 31, 1997. Navy need for the property will cease when environmental cleanup actions are complete.

The improvements Navy placed on the property associated with its military use would be liabilities to the US Fish and Wildlife Service in managing the property as wildlife refuge. The Aleut Corporation (TAC) has proposed an exchange of property with US Fish and Wildlife Service under which TAC would acquire approximately 46,000 acres of this property on Adak, including all developed areas. A draft transfer agreement containing terms and conditions of such a property exchange is being negotiated among Navy, The Aleut Corporation, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Congressional action will be necessary to remove the property from the wildlife refuge and ratify the transfer agreement. Details of the property conveyance remain to be worked out.

The Adak Reuse Corporation has been authorized by the State of Alaska and the Department of Defense to undertake reuse planning for the former NAF Adak property. ARC has developed a draft reuse plan. Navy has entered into a lease with ARC to enable commercial reuse to get underway. ARC has subleased a portion of one building and a pier to Adak Seafoods, which is conducting fish processing operations. The lease term currently extends through 2001.

A petition has been filed with the State of Alaska to form a second class city on Adak. A decision by the Local Boundary Commission is expected by May 2000.

Environmental Cleanup

National Priorities List

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) placed NAF Adak on the CERCLA National Priorities List in May 1994. This action made cleanup and restoration of Adak a National Priority and gave impetus to expedited environmental restoration funding.

Agencies Responsible for Environmental Cleanup

The U.S. Navy entered into four different agreements with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation that have governed investigation and cleanup of contaminated areas on Adak. These three agencies have primary responsibility for all environmental cleanup decisions made for NAF Adak.

Closure and Environmental Restoration Objectives

The following are the closure and environmental restoration objectives outlined for closure of NAF Adak by the Navy and state and federal regulators:

- Protect human health and the environment;
- Comply with all existing federal and state statutes and regulations;
- Conduct all environmental restoration activities in a manner consistent with federal and State of Alaska cleanup regulations;
- Conduct an environmental baseline survey (EBS) to establish the current environmental condition of the property, supporting its lease or transfer;
- Establish priorities for environmental restoration and restoration-related one-time compliance activities (so that property disposal and reuse goals can be met);
- Initiate selected remedial actions to control risks or reduce them to manageable levels;
- Consider future land use when assessing risks associated with releases of hazardous substances, contaminants, or hazardous wastes;
- Develop, evaluate, and select remedial actions in a manner consistent with applicable state and federal statutory and regulatory requirements;
- Commence remedial actions for areas of environmental concern and prioritize actions for areas to allow property disposal and reuse;
- Advise the Navy Real Estate and BRAC organizations and the community regarding property that is deemed environmentally suitable for reuse and;
- Establish programs to monitor the efficacy of remedial actions.

Environmental Issues for Adak

The major environmental issues on Adak center around four areas:

- Contamination from hazardous substance;
- Contamination from petroleum;
- Solid waste disposal issues; and
- Hazards from past use of ordnance and explosives.

Addressing Major Environmental Issues

In agreements between the Navy, EPA and the State of Alaska and in response to community concerns, it was decided it would be best to deal with hazardous substance and petroleum cleanup issues separately from ordnance issues. Two "operable units" were established called Operable Unit A and Operable Unit B. "Operable unit" is a term used to describe an area being addressed as part of the CERCLA process. Operable Unit A covers all hazardous substance and petroleum related issues, as well as solid waste management. Operable Unit B addresses unexploded ordnance.

A Record of Decision for Operable Unit A was signed by the Navy. Regulatory agency concurrences are pending. Remedial actions for Operable Unit A issues have been taken. Maintenance and monitoring of the effectiveness of these remedies will continue.

Navy and the regulatory agencies are developing a remedial investigation work plan to further characterize known and suspected Operable Unit B ordnance sites during the 2000 field season.

Where to Get Information

INFOLINE: 1-800-360-1561
WEB SITE: www.adakupdate.com

University of Alaska Anchorage,
Library Reserve Room, 3211 Providence Dr.
907-786-1871
M-F, 8 am to 5 pm,
Contact: Librarian

Former NAF Adak, Adak Island, Alaska,
Bob Reeve High School Library
907-592-8170
M-F, 8 am to 5 pm,
Contact: Lt. Commander Ted Posuniak

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