

Corps earmarks \$1.1 million to investigate Borrego military sites

The Army Corps of Engineers will reveal how property near Borrego will be evaluated for potential munitions cleanup during a public meeting and release of a draft work plan May 24.

The meeting is scheduled for 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the multipurpose room at Borrego Springs High School, 2281 Diegueno Road. Poster viewing and an open house will take place starting at 6 p.m. A project briefing is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m.

The meeting marks the start of a public comment period that ends on July 7. The public is being asked to comment on the Corps' work plan that covers approximately 256,000 acres known as the Borrego Maneuver Area.

The work plan identifies how the property will be checked for unexploded ordnance or munition debris. After each property has been evaluated, the Corps will propose what to do about the military remnants.

The Corps has dedicated \$1.1 million for the initial investigation of the Borrego Maneuver Area.

"The idea is to find the areas where munitions may be concentrated," said Larry Sievers, program manager for the Corps' Formerly Used Defense Sites. "We are only in investigation mode."

Areas of investigation include large parcels in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park east of Borrego Springs and west of Highway 86, and portions of Military Wash in Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area. The study also includes Camp Ensign, portions of Clark Dry Lake and Benson Dry Lake. About 70 property owners will be contacted for right-of-way access, Sievers said.

Sievers said the Borrego Maneuver Area is a priority for the FUDS program because of its size. The Corps is working to reduce the total acreage that needs to have munitions removed. By performing the study, the Corps could determine that the threat of unexploded ordnance is not strong enough to warrant field removal.

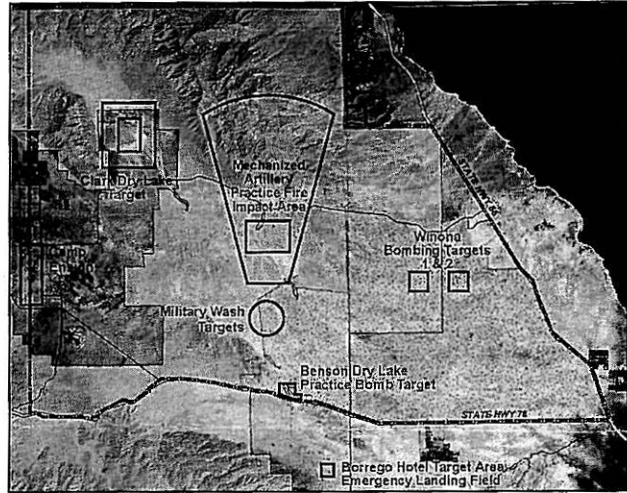
In addition to subsurface removal of ordnance or military debris, other options include adding warning signs, surface removal, or taking no action. Prior military actions within the area included anti-aircraft artillery firing, bombing and rocket strafing.

The draft work plan outlines the steps that will be taken to study the eight sites. Those steps include a visual survey of the land and the marking of locations where munitions exist, investigation of ordnance and collection of soil samples.

Sievers said the work plan spells out how the Corps plans to work with ABDSP and OWSVRA to address habitat concerns. For the inspections in ABDSP, for example, vehicular access will be limited to roads and approved trails. Sievers said the investigations would be done on foot, using handheld devices. In OWSVRA, off-road vehicles may be utilized to search for ordnance.

An Environmental Protection Plan included in the draft work plan identifies cultural and biological resources found in and around the BMA. It also outlines mitigation measures, such as avoiding these areas during surface visual surveys, geophysical investigations and munitions or explosive intrusive investigations, if any.

Following the first public comment



MAP courtesy of ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
BORREGO Maneuver Area, eight local sites formerly used by the military for training, are identified on above map. A draft work plan detailing how the sites might be studied for potential munition hazards will be released in Borrego on May 24.

period, the Corps will release a final work plan. Then, right-of-entry permission will be sought from property owners. Field investigations could start as early as September. There is no timeline for when cleanup could begin or any indication if actual removal of explosives or ordnance will be necessary.

The BMA is one of 10,000 sites identified nationwide as a Formerly Used Defense Site. The Department of Defense is responsible for investigation and potential restoration of properties used by the military.

Property owners and other stakeholders, including representatives of State Parks and the state Department of Toxic Substance Control, will meet with the Corps and environmental contractors at 9 a.m. on May 24 in the high school's multipurpose room for

the third Technical Project Planning meeting addressing the Corps' work plan.