



# Environmental News Update March 2011

## Status of the Mather Cleanup:

*What's been done? What's left to do?*

Mather is in the final stages of environmental cleanup. All major decisions have been made, documented and overseen by the Air Force Real Property Agency, the U.S. EPA, Department of Toxic Substances Control, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the Integrated Waste Management Board. Community members have provided input through the Mather Restoration Advisory Board since 1994.

The Air Force has spent more than \$162 million on the cleanup and millions more will be spent for ongoing monitoring and operation of groundwater treatment and soil cleanup systems, and maintenance and monitoring of landfill sites. Of the 89 sites identified at Mather, 75 sites have been cleaned up so far. The 14 remaining sites are being cleaned or awaiting official closure documentation. All cleanup systems are in place and operating properly.

### BACKGROUND

Mather Air Force Base, earlier called Mather Field, operated from 1918 to 1993, including some breaks in service. Mather was used for combat pilot and navigator training. During that time, Mather's military workforce used chemicals,

including fuels, solvents and oils in support of national defense. Chemical leaks and spills, as well as outdated disposal methods, contributed to soil and groundwater contamination. Such disposal practices, legal in the past, are now known to cause environmental contamination and are no longer used.

Contaminated water is not used for drinking water. Drinking water is supplied by the Sacramento County Water Agency. Wells providing drinking water are tested regularly, and annual water quality reports are provided to water customers as required by law. In addition, the Air Force samples the water from many



## Quick Facts

### Mather Cleanup Update **2011**

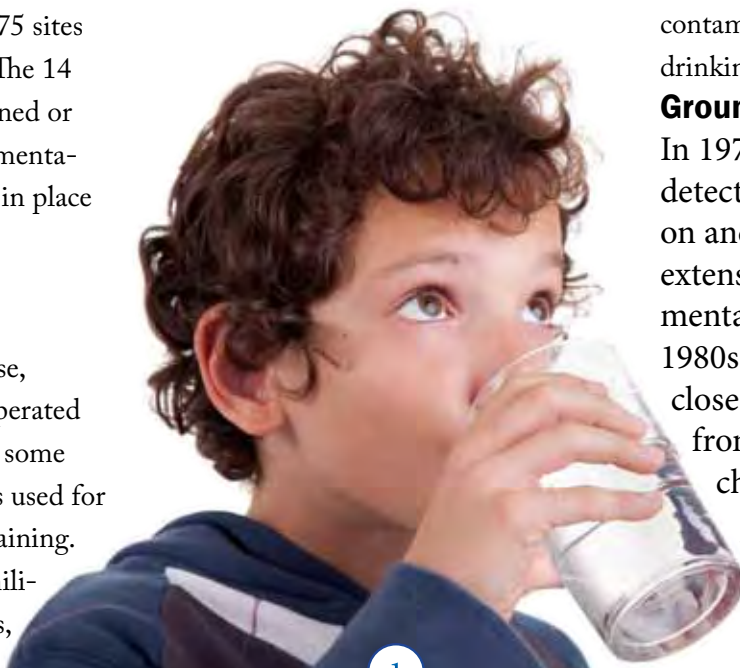
- 89 sites identified
- 75 sites are clean
- Drinking water is strictly monitored and safe
- Contaminated groundwater is being treated
- Former landfills are monitored

drinking water wells to ensure that the contaminated water doesn't impact drinking water supplies.

### Groundwater Cleanup

In 1979, contamination was detected in water supply wells on and near Mather. More extensive testing and environmental cleanup began in the 1980s, years before Mather closed. The biggest problem was from solvents such as tetrachloroethene (TCE) and perchloroethene (PCE), which is also known

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# Mather Today

**A**t the end of 2010, the former Mather Air Force Base housed 54 businesses and government agencies, an enormous regional park and 18-hole golf course, more than 1,200 single-family homes, a cargo-focused airport and other amenities. An estimated 4,192 people worked there.

services for 1,250-1,300 veterans from throughout Northern California every day.

Sacramento County is the local redevelopment agency (LRA) for the former base. Much of the property at the former base (about 4,188 of 5,717 acres total) is still owned by the Air Force. The airport and

parks are owned by the Air Force and leased to Sacramento County until the property is deeded to county ownership.

Mather Airport, operated by the Sacramento County Department of Airports, reopened as a civilian airport in 1995. With two parallel runways and a 24-hour air traffic control tower, the airport has attracted general aviation, commercial air cargo, military use and air taxis. One major

cargo carrier, UPS, operates at Mather. Despite the economic downturn, more than 50,000 flights went through Mather Airport in the year ending in August, 2010.

An adjacent sports center run by the Cordova Recreation

and Park District provides the public with recently-renovated facilities such as a state-of-the-art softball complex, a huge new skateboard park, an all-weather soccer field, a gym, racquetball courts, a weight room, aerobics classes, an outdoor jogging trail, lockers and showers. Nearby is Mather Community Campus, a two-year transitional housing program for the homeless run by Volunteers of America.

In the south part of the former base, dilapidated military housing was demolished and replaced with 1,271 attractive homes comprising a community known as “Independence at Mather.” Proximate amenities include the 1,434-acre Mather Regional Park, with an 18-hole golf course and a lake stocked with bass and trout. Hikers and picnickers enjoy the area, and vernal pools – with their seasonal displays of wildflowers – attract thousands of visitors in spring.

Another big draw is the annual California Capitol Air Show, which attracted a record 120,000 viewers to Mather in September 2010.



Largest Employers at Mather - End of 2010	
Companies	Approx. # of Employees
Sacramento Veterans' Affairs Medical Center at Mather	800
Sutter Health and Sutter Health Information Services	700
California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA)	330
Federal Aviation Administration's Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON)	300
Blood Source (administration building and lab)	250

The bustling Sacramento Veterans' Affairs Medical Center at Mather – operated by the federal government on land located within the city limits of Rancho Cordova, a city incorporated years after the former base closed – provides medical

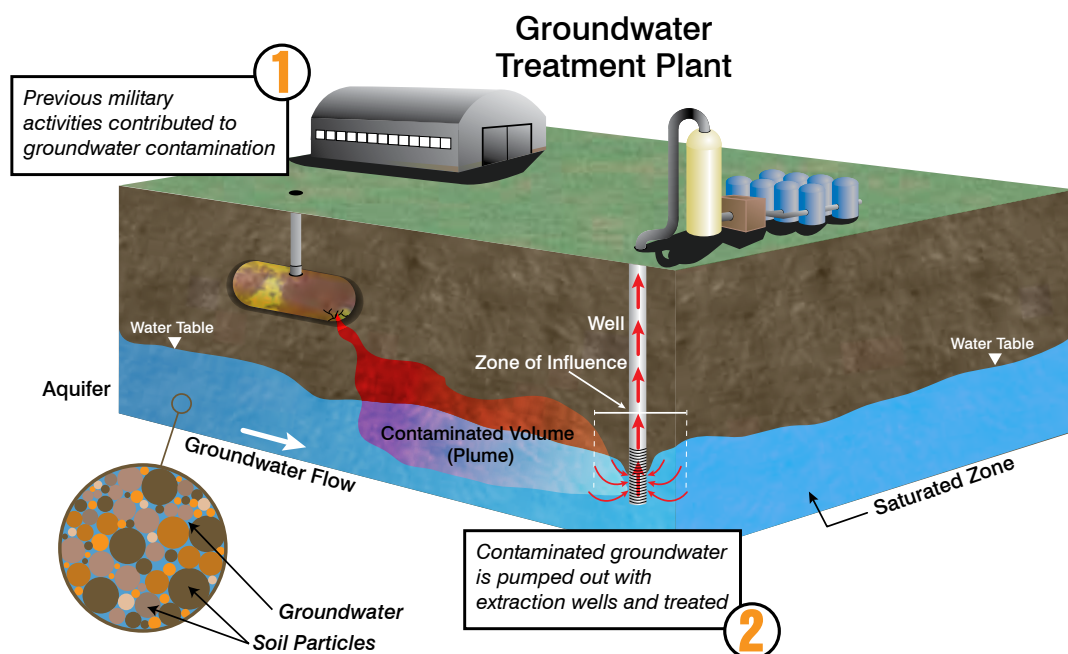


## Mather Status

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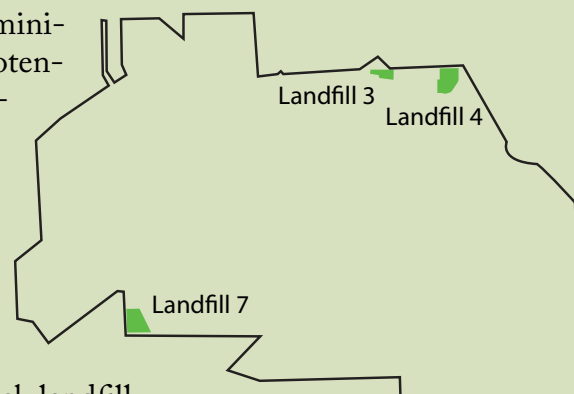
as tetrachloroethene. The cleanup primarily involves removing contaminants from groundwater located beneath the land surface. Three pump-and-treat systems were built at Mather to pump groundwater to the surface and remove contaminants.

- More than 12 billion gallons of groundwater have been pumped out of the ground and treated at Mather.
- Some 4,050 pounds of solvents have been removed from the water and the cleaned water is injected back into the ground or used to maintain the level of Mather Lake during the dry season.
- More than 600 wells are in use at Mather as part of the groundwater cleanup. Thirty-four wells extract water for treatment, eight are injection wells that return cleaned water back into the ground, and the rest are monitoring wells, used to track and measure contamination.
- There are four plumes, three of which have an active pump-and-treat remedy.
- The Air Force will continue managing the cleanup process until the cleanup is finished.



## LANDFILL CLEANUP

As part of the environmental cleanup, former landfills at several sites were dug up and their waste was placed in landfill 4. Landfill sites 3, 4 and 7 were then “capped,” or covered with impervious barriers. Such barriers keep rainwater from percolating through the waste and minimize the potential for contaminants to leach into the groundwater. Landfills are monitored to track landfill gases and groundwater quality near the landfills.



## SOIL CLEANUP

Environmental cleanup began in the 1980s, years before Mather closed. The cleanup primarily involves removing contaminants from the soil using various processes. These include soil vapor extraction and bioventing.

- Soil vapor extraction, which vacuums chemical vapors from the spaces between the grains of soil above the water table, has removed an estimated 1,118,195 pounds of petroleum products from the soil.
- Soil vapor extraction has also removed some 7,411 pounds of solvents from the soil.
- Bioventing pumps air underground so oxygen moves through the soil to promote the destruction of contamination by microorganisms such as bacteria.





## **MATHER** Environmental News Update

**AFRPA Western REC**  
3411 Olson Street  
McClellan, CA 95652

{ The drinking water on and around Mather is SAFE }

## New Website is all about Mather

To read the latest news about Mather, to check on upcoming events, find answers to Frequently Asked Questions, or review past history of the former base, check out the Air Force Real Property Agency's newly expanded Mather website at:

<http://www.safie.hq.af.mil/afrrpa/legacybrac/mather/index.asp>

**Next RAB meeting is  
May 25 at 6 p.m.**

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Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-6002

