

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Community Involvement Coordinator



Jose Garcia was born and raised in Southern California. He studied political science and sociology at UC Santa Barbara and pursued graduate work in public policy and natural resources and environmental at the University of Michigan. Jose's main research focus was international development, with an emphasis on agricultural development and coffee. He has been at EPA since July 2006 and has been working with the McClellan team since September 2006. In his spare time, he enjoys traveling, nonfiction reading, cooking, watching movies and having dinner with friends.

JOSE GARCIA

Environmental Action

UPDATE

A Newsletter About Environmental Activities at McClellan

May 2007

Focused strategic sites update

This past year, progress has been made on selecting a final cleanup remedy for 11 sites that contain the largest volume of hazardous waste to be addressed at the former military base. The Focused Strategic Sites, are a combination of disposal pits, a fire training area, and a small arms firing range.

Contamination at the sites includes volatile organic compounds (known as VOCs) and non-VOCs. VOCs are organic compounds, mainly solvents and petroleum-related compounds, that migrate through soil and readily evaporate into the air. Non-VOCs include metals, petroleum compounds, pesticides, radionuclides, poly aromatic hydrocarbons, dioxins/furans and PCBs. Less mobile than VOCs, non-VOCs tend to be found in the top 15 feet of soil, but could be as deep as 30 feet below the ground surface since wastes were buried in the disposal pits to those depths.

The Final Focused Strategic Sites Feasibility Study, released in May 2006, presented cleanup options for addressing contamination at the 11 sites and evaluates costs for each alternative.

The Focused Strategic Sites Proposed Plan presenting the Air Force's cleanup alternatives for the 11 sites was released in October, followed by a public meeting in November. In the meeting, the Air Force explained the cleanup options and the community was given an opportunity to ask questions and provide official comments about the alternatives in the plan. The public comment period for the Proposed Plan ran from October 30, 2006, through January 16, 2007.

The Air Force's preferred cleanup option for the 11 sites is Excavation and Consolidation of the wastes for two of the sites (CS 010 and the Small Arms Firing Range) and a Composite Cap for the other nine sites (CS 011, CS 012, CS 013, CS 014, CS 022, CS 024, Fire Training Area, PRL 008, and the Vadose Zone site).

Because of a Time Critical Removal Action that began in 2001, CS 010 has already been excavated. A Time Critical Removal Action is a cleanup action the Air Force can take to expedite cleanup.

Approximately 25,000 cubic yards of excavated soil remain stockpiled in the CS 010 weatherization tent. The final solution for the stockpiled soil will be determined in the Focused Strategic Sites Record of Decision.

The Focused Strategic Sites plan is a major milestone toward selecting, designing and implementing cleanup programs.

The final selection and documentation of remedies for the sites will be presented in the Record of Decision, which is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2007. The Record of Decision paves the way for remedial design, construction, redevelopment, and monitoring of the affected areas.

Groundwater cleanup at McClellan

The Air Force continued to make significant progress

cleaning up the groundwater at McClellan during 2006. Using 103 extractions wells pumping at a cumulative rate on average of 1,600 gallons per minute, the groundwater treatment plant removed more than 1,000 pounds of solvents from the groundwater this past year. The water is cleaned to drinking water standards then returned to Magpie Creek and Beaver Pond on the former base.

Please see Groundwater, Page Two

Environmentally sound: McClellan's successful, continuing cleanup has enabled its simultaneous transformation to a thriving business park.

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Groundwater

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The groundwater at McClellan was contaminated from past military operations. Chemicals, primarily solvents and degreasers, were washed into the soil and groundwater from spills, leaking pipes, storage tanks, and drains. Past chemical disposal practices that were considered acceptable decades ago caused additional groundwater contamination.

The Air Force began investigating and addressing the problem in the early 1980s. This included the installation of the groundwater treatment system and an expansive groundwater sampling program on and off the former base. Over the past 20 years, the Air Force has continued to expand the treatment system and monitor the groundwater to ensure that all drinking water supplies in the area are safe. There are more than 500 sampling locations to help keep track of the contamination and monitor the cleanup progress.

The Air Force, with regulatory agency oversight, will continue to operate the treatment system until all groundwater at McClellan is cleaned to drinking water standards.

Because it will take many years to complete, the Air Force is continually looking for more efficient and cost effective ways to clean groundwater at McClellan.



Workers install one of the 103 groundwater extraction wells at McClellan. The McClellan groundwater treatment system is successfully keeping the problem in check.

Last year, Air Force engineers removed an off-gas treatment system from the groundwater treatment plant, eliminating the need for natural gas in the treatment process, saving more than \$200,000 annually.

The Air Force also recently streamlined its sampling program, reducing the amount of manpower needed to collect water samples.

"This allows us to spend more time analyzing the data, and gives us more information to continue to optimize the treatment system," said Don Gronstal, McClellan's groundwater program manager.

Groundwater Record of Decision

The Air Force held a public comment period on the Groundwater VOC Record of Decision from November 18, 2006 to January 2, 2007. During this comment period, members of the public were encouraged to provide comments on the final cleanup solution for groundwater at McClellan.

A Record of Decision is a legally binding document between the Air Force, State of California, and U.S. EPA that explains the selected cleanup remedy for a given site.

The Groundwater VOC Record of Decision is expected to be completed this summer. Essentially, this document will stipulate the cleanup levels that must be reached. It is estimated that the cleanup and monitoring of groundwater at McClellan will continue for about another 55 years.

Restoration advisory board learns about regional groundwater issues

The Air Force groundwater cleanup system treats about 1,500 gallons of groundwater per day at McClellan.

The cleaned water is then released into Magpie Creek, which eventually flows into the Sacramento River.

As we all know, water is a precious resource, especially in California. During the Dec. 2006 RAB meeting, a few members of the public asked for the Air Force to provide information as to how the McClellan treatment system fits into the "big picture" as it relates to drinking water supplies in the region. The Air Force asked Rob Swartz, senior project manager from the Sacramento Groundwater Authority (SGA) to provide an informational briefing to the RAB and the public during the Feb. 2007 RAB meeting.

"I'm pleased to be able to talk to you about regional water issues tonight because they are so important to us all," Swartz said at the RAB meeting. "We at the SGA work very closely with the region's water suppliers, as well as the Air Force to work on solutions to regional water supply issues."

Swartz provided background on the SGA and its role in groundwater management. While the various independent water suppliers in the area act autonomously in their daily operations, the SGA was formed in 1998 as a local "joint powers authority" for Sacramento, Sacramento County, Citrus Heights and Folsom with an eye on regional groundwater supply issues.

The SGA's role is to:

- Provide an effective institutional framework for managing the regional groundwater basin
- Develop and implement a groundwater management plan to ensure basin sustainability
- Develop and implement strategies to safeguard water quality
- Develop policies to encourage conjunctive use to ensure long-term sustainability of the basin



The water purveyors that provide water to McClellan and the areas immediately adjacent to the former base include Sacramento Suburban Water District, Rio Linda/Elverta Community Water District, California American Water, Sacramento County and the City of Sacramento. These agencies provide clean, safe drinking water to households and businesses.

Swartz explained during the meeting that over the past 50 years, the groundwater levels have consistently dropped, due to increased water demand and reliance on groundwater particularly in the area around McClellan. In the 1990s, people began to realize that there needed to be a better approach to meeting water supply while protecting the environment, and a collaborative process called the Water Forum began in 1993. This led to a document

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— Rob Swartz
Senior Project Manager,
Sacramento Groundwater Authority

called the Water Forum Agreement that was signed in 2000 by 40 stakeholder groups.

The Water Forum Agreement outlined a plan for more surface water to be used during years with more rainfall, or "wet" years. Groundwater would be relied upon more heavily during "dry" years. This approach would help stabilize groundwater levels and help preserve the American River.

Toward the end of the RAB meeting, Swartz and the Air Force's environmental coordinator, Steve Mayer, tied the McClellan cleanup program into the regional groundwater discussion. McClellan's 1,500 gallons per minute of pumping roughly equates to 1.5% of the total amount of groundwater being extracted within the area managed by SGA.

For more information about groundwater issues in north Sacramento County, visit the SGA's Web Site at www.sgah2o.org.