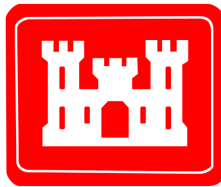


Community Relations Plan

Benedict Field Bombing Target

**St. Croix,
United States Virgin Islands**



**United States Army Corps of Engineers
Jacksonville District
Jacksonville, Florida 32207-8137**

JULY 2025

Table of Contents

	Page
1.0 Overview of Community Relations Plan	1
2.0 Site background and characteristics.....	2
2.1 Site history	2
2.1.1 Potential Contaminants	3
2.1.2 United States Army Corps of Engineers’ Involvement.....	3
2.1.3 Community Reaction.....	4
2.2 Property Description and Location	4
2.3 Property Inspections and Cleanup Activities	5
2.3.1 Known or Suspected Contamination.....	5
2.3.2 Nature of Threat	5
2.3.3 History of Inspections and Studies Conducted at the Site.....	5
2.3.4 Lead Agency	7
3.0 Community Background.....	7
3.1 Community Profile.....	7
3.2 History of Community Involvement	8
3.3 Key Community Concerns.....	8
3.4 Response to Community Concerns	8
3.5 Summary of Communication Needs	8
4.0 Public Involvement Program	9
4.1 The Plan.....	9
4.2 Projected Schedule for Community Involvement Activities.....	12
5.0 References.....	13
Appendix A: Community Survey	1
Appendix B: Media Contacts.....	1
Appendix C: Potential Meeting Locations.....	1
Appendix D: Public Involvement Tools	1
Appendix E: Stakeholders List	1

Figures

Figure 1: Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act Flow	2
Figure 1: Benedict Field Bombing Target Location Map.....	3
Figure 2: Benedict Field Bombing Target Site Details.....	5

Tables

Table 1: Previous Studies and Historical Documents.....	5
Table 2: Census Data for Southcentral District, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands	8

1.0 OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN

The United States Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District (USACE-SAJ) developed this Community Relations Plan to facilitate two-way communication between the community living, working, or visiting near the Benedict Field Bombing Target Formerly Used Defense Site and USACE and to encourage community involvement in site activities. USACE will utilize the community involvement activities outlined in this plan to ensure that residents are continuously informed and provided opportunities to be involved.

This Community Relations Plan addresses the site's relationship to the community and USACE (Section 2.0), provides a background of the community (Section 3.0), presents the USACE's community involvement program (Section 4.0), and provides a listing of available resources. USACE drew upon several information sources to develop this plan and will oversee the implementation of the community involvement activities outlined in this plan.

Across the country, the Department of Defense acquired properties, often during times of conflict, to use for military demonstrations, training, and testing. Once the military no longer needed the land, the federal government transferred it to other entities. These Formerly Used Defense Sites can range from privately owned farms to national parks. They also include residential, educational, and industrial areas. The Department of Defense is committed to protecting people and the environment and improving public safety and created the Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites to evaluate, and if necessary, remediate Formerly Used Defense Sites. The Department of Defense is the lead agency for the Formerly Used Defense Sites program, and the U.S. Army serves as the lead agent for the Department of Defense. USACE executes the program on behalf of the Army and follows the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act process has three major phases: inventory, study, and removal/remediation. The inventory phase includes searching real estate records to verify previous Department of Defense use or ownership. In the Preliminary Assessment, USACE evaluates eligibility and the potential need for cleanup. If there are no potential risks to people or the environment, no action is needed. If the Preliminary Assessment determines further evaluation of potential risks is necessary, the project will move to the study phase. The study phase consists of several investigations including a Site Inspection, Remedial Investigation, and Feasibility Study. A Site Inspection documents the confirmation of the presence or absence of potential risks. The purpose of a Remedial Investigation is to determine what military-related impacts may be present and where it is. This is known as characterizing the nature and extent of potential risks to people or the environment. If the Remedial Investigation identifies risks to people or the environment, a Feasibility Study is prepared to evaluate appropriate response to address those risks. The Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study is summarized in the Proposed Plan which also identifies USACE's preferred alternative. The public has a minimum of 30 days to comment on the Proposed Plan. After the public comment period, USACE selects the remedy in the Decision Document. If there are risks to people or the environment, the project will move to the removal/remediation phase. This phase includes designing and implementing the necessary actions to address the risk. Once USACE implements the selected remedy, the project reaches Response Complete. Depending on the site, the project may closeout with no further action necessary, or it may move into the Long-Term Management

phase where we evaluate the site every five years to determine if the implemented remedy is still protecting people and the environment. Figure 1 depicts the process USACE follows. USACE has implemented the selected remedy (public awareness), and the project has achieved Response Complete. The Pinecastle Jeep Range project is now in Long-Term Management. While in Long-Term Management, we will continue to maintain the public awareness program.

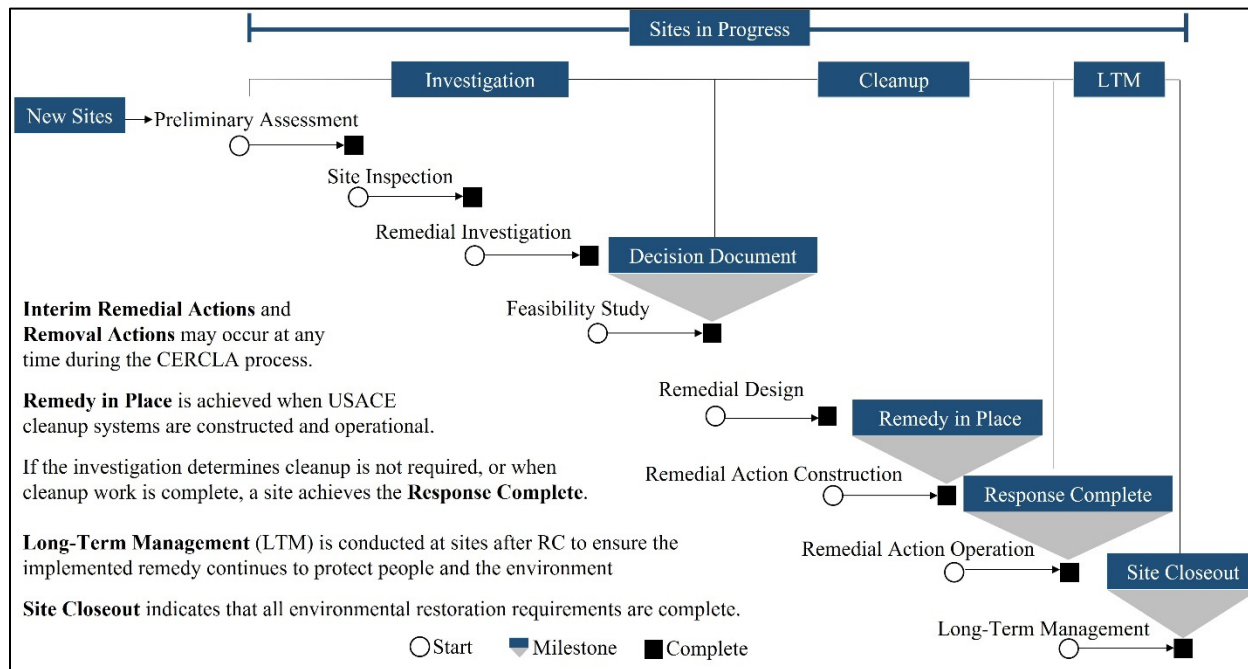


Figure 1: Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act Flow

2.0 SITE BACKGROUND AND CHARACTERISTICS

Across the country, the Department of Defense acquired properties, often during times of conflict, to use for military demonstrations, training, and testing. Once the military no longer needed the land, it was transferred to other entities. These Formerly Used Defense Sites can range from privately-owned farms to national parks. They also include residential, educational, and industrial areas. The Department of Defense is committed to correcting environmental damage caused by its activities and created the Defense Environmental Restoration Program - Formerly Used Defense Sites to evaluate, and if necessary, remediate Formerly Used Defense Sites. USACE is responsible for managing the Formerly Used Defense Sites program on behalf of the Department of Defense.

2.1 SITE HISTORY

The 162-acre Benedict Field Bombing Target is located on the southern coast of St. Croix in the United States (U.S.) Virgin Islands (see Figure 1). It was used as a low altitude, practice dive bombing target by Army Air Forces during World War II. The Army acquired the property for the former Benedict Field between August 1940 and September 1943. Benedict Field was an auxiliary airfield for Borinquen Field in Puerto Rico. The Benedict Field property was declared excess in 1947 and was conveyed to the municipality of St. Croix in November 1948. The Virgin Islands Port Authority owns the land, and it is part of the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport property.



2.1.1 Potential Contaminants

The military used the site as a practice bombing target in the 1940s. Since that time, several studies have been completed to identify munitions or other explosive hazards. While there is no evidence of environmental contamination associated with the former Benedict Field Bombing Target based on the previous studies, the potential exists that munitions (e.g., practice bombs with signal cartridges or spotting charges) could still be present at the site.

2.1.2 United States Army Corps of Engineers' Involvement

Shortly after the Formerly Used Defense Sites program began, USACE visited the site, and in 1992, determined it was eligible for the program. Please see Section 2.3.3 for a list and summary of previous studies and investigations conducted for the Benedict Field Bombing Target.

Figure 2: Benedict Field Bombing Target Location Map

Currently, USACE is conducting a Remedial Investigation. The purpose of a Remedial Investigation is to determine if munitions may be present, and if so, what type, in what amounts, and in what locations. This is known as characterizing the nature and extent of potential military related impacts. USACE will search for munitions along paths (called transects) and collect environmental samples to analyze for munitions constituents (the metals and explosives that comprise munitions).

2.1.3 Community Reaction

The public is generally aware of the military's use of Benedict Field during World War II but may be less familiar with the Benedict Field Bombing Target. Information about the practice bombing target is available to the public at the Florence Williams Public Library in Christiansted and on USACE's website. Information about the former Benedict Field is also on the airport's website. No one from the community has expressed any concerns, but USACE will continue to monitor the community's interest and will respond accordingly.

2.2 PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

The Benedict Field Bombing Target is located on the southern coast of St. Croix, the largest of the U.S. Virgin Islands. The former bombing target includes 162 acres, primarily on land with a small portion of the site extending into the Caribbean Sea. The site is located approximately six miles from the town of Frederiksted and nine miles from Christiansted (see Figure 1). The Virgin Islands Ports Authority owns the site which is in the southwestern portion of the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport property. The target area is south of the runways and airport buildings, south of Airport Road (see Figure 2). There are no roads leading into the site, but there are dirt paths that provide access. Vegetation at the site is dense, as it has not been cleared since the 1960s.

While there are no homes, businesses, schools, playgrounds, or healthcare facilities within the target area, residential, commercial, and industrial areas are located near it. A portion of the target area is in the Caribbean Sea, and the site is in a coastal management zone. There are no protected species or habitats, but there potentially could be sensitive ecological areas. USACE is coordinating with the appropriate agencies and will have a biologist on the team to make sure these areas are appropriately protected. The property was formerly used as a plantation, and the great house and sugar mill ruins, as well as a slave graveyard, are still located at the site. The fieldwork will not impact the archeologically sensitive areas.

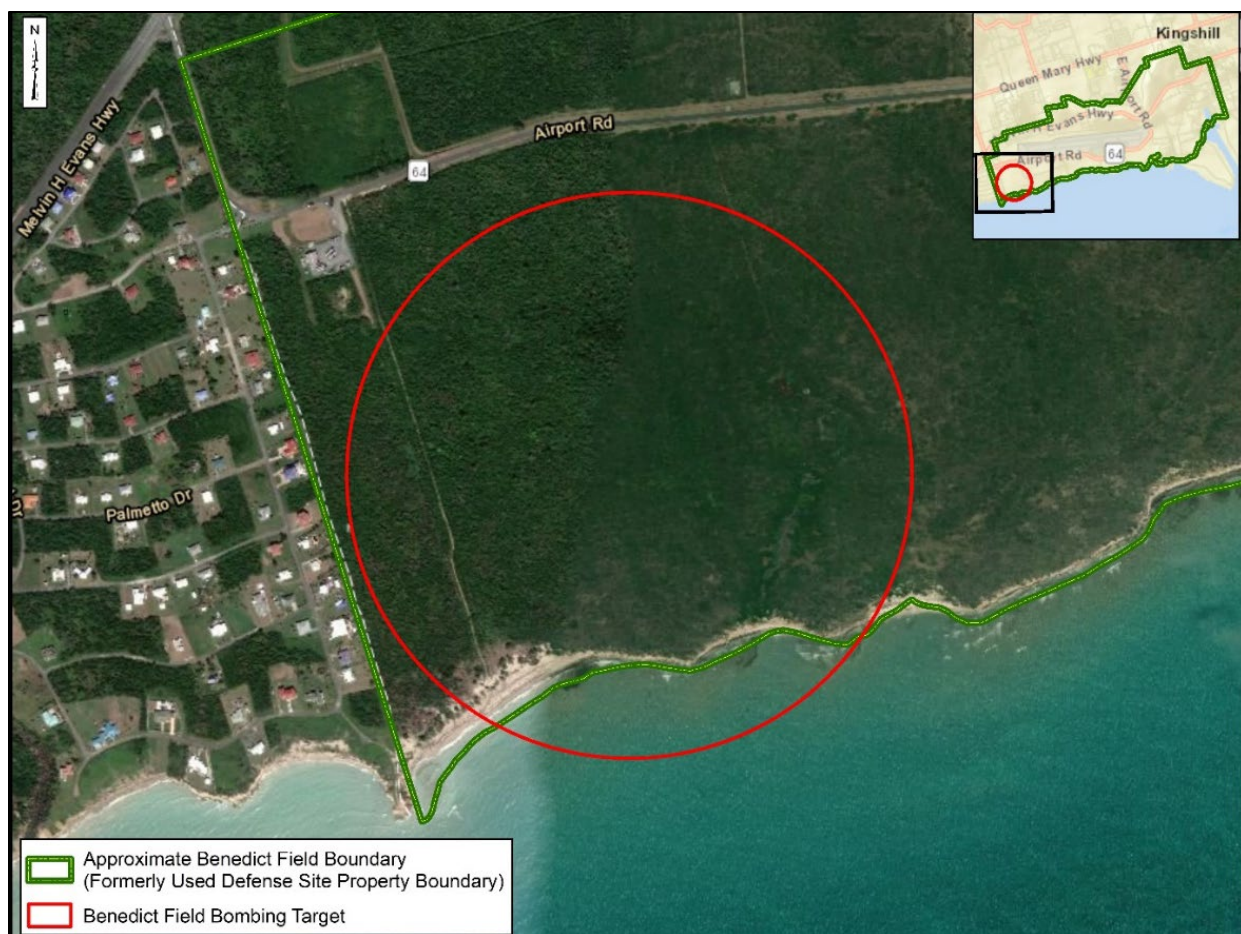


Figure 3: Benedict Field Bombing Target Site Details

2.3 PROPERTY INSPECTIONS AND CLEANUP ACTIVITIES

2.3.1 *Known or Suspected Contamination*

Based on the historical use of the Benedict Field Bombing Target, USACE is concerned about the potential presence of munitions.

2.3.2 *Nature of Threat*

Munitions could pose a potential safety hazard to people who touch, pick up, or otherwise disturb them. The metals and explosives that comprise munitions (munitions constituents) could potentially be a risk to people and the environment if they are released to the soil and/or sediment.

2.3.3 *History of Inspections and Studies Conducted at the Site*

Inspections and studies conducted at the Benedict Field Bombing Target are listed in Table 1 and summarized below the table.

Table 1: Previous Studies and Historical Documents

Year Completed	Activity
1947	Certificate of Clearance

Year Completed	Activity
1989	Inventory Project Report
1992	Findings and Determination of Eligibility
2003	Reevaluation of Inventory Project Report
2006	Preliminary Assessment Report
2008	Archives Search Report Supplement
2011	Site Inspection Report
2013	Revised Inventory Project Report
2018	Inventory Project Report Amendment
2024	Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study

1947 Certificate of Clearance

The Certificate of Clearance documented the activities done to remove munitions from the site prior to transfer from the Department of Defense.

1989 Inventory Project Report

As part of the Inventory Project Report, a team visited the site and found no evidence of munitions. The report confirmed use by the Department of Defense.

1992 Findings and Determination of Eligibility

USACE visited the site and determined it was eligible for the Formerly Used Defense Sites program.

2003 Revised Inventory Project Report

The Revised Inventory Project Report determined there was a possibility munitions were present and recommended further investigation.

2006 Preliminary Assessment Report

The Preliminary Assessment compiled information obtained through historical research at various archives and records holding facilities. The investigation was primarily a textual, cartographic, and photographic research and analysis effort. It also used property visits and interviews to gather information concerning the site. The research was used to develop recommendations for further action, if needed.

The report did not recommend further action, based on the findings. The bombing area was used for practice bombing only, and a certificate of clearance was issued. There was no evidence of military use in a 1971 aerial photograph, and during the site visit, the team did not find any debris, scarring, or other remains in the bombing area.

2008 Archives Search Report Supplement

The Archives Search Report Supplement specified the size and location of Munitions Response Sites within Benedict Field.

2011 Site Inspection Report

The potential presence of munitions was evaluated and documented in the Site Inspection Report. During the site visit, a piece of munitions debris was found. The report recommended that a Remedial Investigation be performed.

2013 Revised Inventory Project Report

The Revised Inventory Project Report corrected the size and location of the Munitions Response Sites.

2018 Inventory Project Report Amendment

Additional historical documents were reviewed for the Inventory Project Report Amendment. As a result, the Benedict Field Bombing Target was confirmed as a low altitude, practice dive bombing target, and the site boundary, acreage, and location were revised accordingly.

2024 Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study

Based on recommendations from the Site Inspection Report and additional historical information, USACE conducted a Remedial Investigation at the Benedict Field Bombing Target. The purpose of the Remedial Investigation was to search for potential munitions and then determine the nature (i.e., type) and extent (i.e., how much and where) of munitions to better understand the potential hazards and risks associated with the site's former use as a bombing target. The team investigated 1,199 target locations on the land transects and 45 locations in the grid. Most of the items found on land were non-munitions related scrap metal. The team did not recover any munitions on land, but a limited number of munitions debris were found including 11 miniature practice bombs, one possible firing pin for a 100-pound practice bomb, and one iron solid shot cannonball; however, the cannonball is not associated with bombing target use (See Figure 4). The munitions debris were found at depths ranging from 0 to 14 inches below the ground surface. No munitions or munitions debris was recovered in the marine portion of the site. The munitions debris, which do not present an explosive hazard, confirm the historical use of the site as a low-altitude practice bombing target and the types of munitions used.

2.3.4 Lead Agency

USACE is the lead agency and is responsible for evaluation and restoration, if necessary, at Benedict Field related to the military's use of the site. USACE is coordinating with U.S. Virgin Islands government representatives, including representatives from the Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

3.0 COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

3.1 COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Benedict Field Bombing Target lies entirely within the St. Croix census area in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and, specifically, the southcentral census district. On average, the population in the southcentral district is younger, more educated, and has a lower mean household income than other residents in St. Croix and the Virgin Islands (see Table 2). When considering meeting locations, USACE will be mindful that 18.4 percent of the population does not have a vehicle. Meetings and printed materials will probably not need to be translated since only a small percentage of the southcentral district community (less than 10 percent) does not speak English well, but the team will monitor the situation and will provide translations as necessary.

Table 2: Census Data for Southcentral District, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands and Nation

Subject	Southcentral Subdistrict		St. Croix		Virgin Islands	
	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>%</i>
Total population	7,415		41,004		87,146	
White	667	9.0	4,915	12.0	11,584	13.3
Black or African American	5,148	69.4	29,107	71.0	62,183	71.4
Hispanic or Latino	2,317	31.2	9,736	23.7	16,075	18.4
Median age (years)	39.9		45.2		45.9	
Owner-occupied housing units	2,641		18,083		39,642	
Population over Age 25 without high school diploma	1,696	41.0	10,926	38.8	24,140	38.8
Population over 25 years with a bachelor's degree or higher	552	13.3	5,985	21.2	13,845	22.3
Language Spoken at Home	552	13.3	5,985	21.2	13,845	22.3
English only	3,646	63.3	25,489	68.4	56,173	69.8
Language other than English	2,110	36.7	11,794	31.6	24,257	30.2
Speak English "very well"	1,600	27.8	9,303	25.0	17,046	21.2
Speak English less than "very well"	510	8.9	2,491	6.7	7,211	9.0
Mean household income (dollars)	\$48,649		\$57,325		\$57,599	
Population below Poverty Line	1,972	32.0	9,811	24.9	19,338	22.8
Families below Poverty Line	464	28.5	2,141	20.7	4,046	18.6
No vehicles available	407	15.4	2,631	14.5	6,625	16.7
COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE						
With a computer	2,306	87.3	16,146	89.3	36,132	91.1
With a broadband internet subscription	1,965	74.4	14,117	78.1	31,400	79.2
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census, U.S. Virgin Islands.						

3.2 HISTORY OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

There has been limited community interest in USACE's projects associated with the Benedict Field Bombing Target. USACE will continue to inform the community and will respond to any concerns that are raised.

3.3 KEY COMMUNITY CONCERNS

No community concerns have been raised to date, but USACE will monitor the situation closely and continue to inform the public about the project and to encourage them to participate in the remedial investigation process.

3.4 RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY CONCERNS

USACE will continue public involvement activities and will respond should concerns arise.

3.5 SUMMARY OF COMMUNICATION NEEDS

USACE community involvement activities include coordinating with the property owner, placing notices in the local newspaper, and posting information on USACE's website. Thus far, no one from the community has contacted USACE, but we will continue to evaluate comments and community feedback to determine if additional efforts are required.

4.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

The overall goal of USACE's public involvement program is to promote two-way communication between citizens and USACE and to provide opportunities for meaningful and active involvement by the community in the remedial investigation process. USACE has or will implement the community involvement activities described below. The following plan is based on concerns frequently expressed by those living near or on a Formerly Used Defense Site.

4.1 THE PLAN

Issue 1: Keeping the Public Informed

Activity 1A: Designate a USACE public involvement coordinator

- Objective: To provide a primary liaison between the community and USACE and to ensure prompt, accurate, and consistent responses, and information dissemination about the site
- Method: USACE will designate a public affairs specialist to handle site inquiries and serve as a point of contact for community members. The public affairs specialist will work closely with the USACE project manager.
- Timing: The public affairs specialist was assigned at the beginning of the project.

Activity 1B: Prepare and distribute site fact sheets and technical summaries

- Objective: To provide citizens with current, accurate, easy-to-read, and easy-to-understand information about the Benedict Field Bombing Target
- Method: Fact sheets will be provided to property owners and will be available on USACE's website (www.saj.usace.army.mil/BenedictField).
- Timing: USACE will prepare and distribute fact sheets as necessary, but at least at the beginning and end of each phase of work.

Activity 1C: Provide a toll-free telephone number for the community to contact USACE

- Objective: To enable citizens to get the latest information available when they want it, rather than having to wait for a meeting or a fact sheet and without incurring any cost
- Method: USACE has a toll-free number that is provided in the fact sheets.
- Timing: The toll-free telephone line is currently operational (800.710.5184).

Activity 1D: Maintain a mailing list for the site

- Objective: To facilitate the distribution of site-specific information to everyone who needs or wants to be kept informed about the site
- Method: USACE will compile the mailing list and will periodically review/revise it to keep it current.

- Timing: Throughout the project

Activity 1E: Establish and Maintain an Administrative Record File

- Objective: To provide residents the documents and resources used by USACE in reaching decisions about the site in a convenient location where residents can read official documents and other pertinent information about the site
- Method: USACE will provide at least two sets of the Administrative Record file for the site, one at the local library near the site and one at the Jacksonville District's website for Benedict Field Bombing Target.
- Timing: The Administrative Record was opened when the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study began, and it will remain open until the Decision Document is signed. It has been established at the Florence Williams Public Library, 1122 King Street, Christiansted, St Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands 00820. It is also available at the district office and on the district website at www.saj.usace.army.mil/BenedictField.

Activity 1F: Provide project information on the internet

- Objective: To provide site and project information as well as general Formerly Used Defense Site information
- Method: Project information is posted on USACE's website.
- Timing: Project information and reports are on the Jacksonville District's Benedict Field website (www.saj.usace.army.mil/BenedictField).

Issue 2: Provide Adequate and Meaningful Opportunities for Community Involvement

Activity 2A: Hold public meetings and special events

- Objective: To update the community on site developments and address community questions, concerns, ideas, and comments
- Method: Meetings will be hosted, as needed, during this phase of work. USACE will schedule, prepare for and attend all announced meetings. USACE will provide at least a two-week notice in advance of the scheduled meeting.
- Timing: As needed

Activity 2B: Solicit interest in a Restoration Advisory Board

- Objective: To provide citizens with a meaningful way to become actively involved and to provide the project delivery team with a viable means of learning citizen concerns and attitudes
- Method: USACE will solicit interest in a Restoration Advisory Board and will provide support as appropriate to facilitate its formation. If formed, USACE will provide administrative support, and USACE's project manager will serve as co-chair along with a representative elected from among the community representatives on the board.
- Timing: USACE solicited interest in a Restoration Advisory Board at the initiation of the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study in 2018, 2020 and 2022, and

determined there was not sufficient, sustained interest. USACE re-assessed interest in 2024 and determined there remains no sufficient, sustained community interest.

Activity 2C: Make informal visits to community

- Objective: To help keep community members informed about the site while providing USACE with feedback about site activities and the community's opinions
- Method: USACE will establish a presence in the community through coordination with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources and the Virgin Islands Port Authority.
- Timing: Calls, as well as periodic visits if needed, will be made throughout the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study phase.

Activity 2D: Solicit comments during a public comment period

- Objective: The objective is to give community members an opportunity to review and comment on various USACE documents, especially the Proposed Plan. The review period provides an opportunity for the citizens to have meaningful involvement in the process while giving the project delivery team valuable information from the community.
- Method: USACE will announce each comment period separately, if necessary. Announcements will appear in local newspapers and fact sheets. Information on the duration and how and where to submit comments will be included.
- Timing: The public comment period will be a minimum of 30 days and is required when the Proposed Plan is released. A public meeting will be scheduled to provide information on the Proposed Plan at the start of the comment period.

Activity 2E: Prepare and issue a Responsiveness Summary

- Objective: To summarize comments received during comment periods, to document how USACE has considered those comments during the decision-making process, and to provide responses to major comments
- Method: USACE will prepare a Responsiveness Summary as a section of the Decision Document, which documents the remedy selection decision. The Responsiveness Summary will include four sections: Overview, Background on Community Involvement, Summary of Comments Received and USACE's Responses, Remedial Design/Remedial Action Concerns. Information, both technical and nontechnical, will be conveyed in a manner that is easily understood.
- Timing: The Responsiveness Summary is a part of the Decision Document.

Activity 2F: Revise the Community Relations Plan

- Objective: To identify and address community needs, issues, or concerns regarding the site that are not currently addressed in this Community Relations Plan
- Method: The revised plan will update the previous version.

- Timing: USACE will revise the plan as community concerns warrant or at least every three years until the site is closed out.

4.2 PROJECTED SCHEDULE FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Activity	Time Frame
Designate a USACE community involvement coordinator	Complete
Prepare and distribute site fact sheets and technical summaries	Complete and as necessary
Provide a toll-free number	Currently in operation
Maintain a mailing list for the Formerly Used Defense Site	Ongoing
Establish and maintain Information Repository	Ongoing, update as needed
Provide project information on the Internet	Ongoing, update as needed
Establish and maintain the Administrative Record	Ongoing, update as needed
Conduct special events	As needed
Hold public meetings	As needed
Solicit interest in a Restoration Advisory Board	Complete and re-assess every two years
Make informal visits to community	As needed
Solicit comments during a public comment period	Once the Proposed Plan is released
Prepare and issue a Responsiveness Summary	Following public comment period
Revise the Community Relations Plan	As needed

5.0 REFERENCES

GovTrack. www.govtrack.us/congress/members/VI.

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APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY SURVEY

**Benedict Field Bombing Target
Community Interview Questionnaire**

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is investigating the Benedict Field Bombing Target to find out if anything remains from the military's training activities. Your answers to the following questions will help us understand what is important to you. Thank you for providing your input and sharing this information with us.

1. Do you live or work near the boundaries of the Benedict Field Bombing Target?
If so, for how long?

2. Prior to today, did you know about the military's training at the Benedict Field Bombing Target? If so, how did you learn about it? What do you know about it?

3. Do you have questions or concerns about this site/project?

4. Would you come to a meeting to hear about our study?

5. What is the best method for sharing information with you?

6. Is there any other information you would like to share with us about your community?

On behalf of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you have any questions or would like more information, please call 1-800-710-5184.

APPENDIX B: MEDIA CONTACTS

Television Stations:

Station	Channel	Address	Telephone
WSVI – Ion	8	Barren Spot Mall, Suite 8, Christiansted, St Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands 00823-4493	340.778.5008

Newspapers:

	Address	Contact
St. Croix Source	(on-line only)	Phone: 340.777.8144 Email: visource@gmail.com
Virgin Islands Daily News	9155 Estate Thomas St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00802	Phone: 340.774.8772 Email: online@dailynews.vi

Radio Stations:

Station	Frequency	Format	Address	Telephone
WJKC-FM	95.1	Urban/Reggae	5020 Anchor Way St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands 00824	340.773.0995
WVIQ-FM	99.5	Adult Contemporary	5020 Anchor Way St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands 00824	340.773.0995
WSTX-FM	100.3	Reggae	2111 Company Street, Suite 3 Christiansted, U.S. Virgin Islands 00820	340.643.9789
WDHP-AM	1620	News/ Talk/ Sports	6079A Castle Coakley Christiansted, U.S. Virgin Islands 00820	340.719.1620

APPENDIX C: POTENTIAL MEETING LOCATIONS

Florence Williams Public Library

1122 King Street

Christiansted, St Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands 00820

Telephone: 340.773.5715

Henry E. Rohlsen Airport

P.O. Box 1134

Christiansted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands 00821

Telephone: 340.778.1012

APPENDIX D: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLS

There is a range of public involvement tools used regarding the Benedict Field Bombing Target to ensure the public can find information and engage in the process. Examples provided in this appendix include fact sheets and notices.

This page is a placeholder for public involvement tool examples, such as the fact sheet.

APPENDIX E: STAKEHOLDERS LIST

United States Army Corps of Engineers

Dana K. Gentry
Project Manager
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
701 San Marco Boulevard
Jacksonville, Florida 32207
Telephone: 904.613.2469
Email: Dana.K.Gentry@usace.army.mil

Michael Malone
Contracting Officer Representative
U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center
4820 University Square
Huntsville, Alabama 35816
Telephone: 256.895.1637
Email: Michael.D.Malone@usace.army.mil

Mark C. Mosher
Public Affairs Specialist
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
701 San Marco Boulevard
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