
PINELLAS AIR-TO-GROUND GUN RANGE
FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITE
PROPOSED PLAN PUBLIC MEETING

The Proposed Plan public meeting took place by video conference call, held by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on Tuesday the 29th day of April, 2025, commencing at the hour of 6:00 P.M.

**Pinellas Air-To-Ground Gun Range Proposed Plan
Transcripts for the Public Meeting**

ATTENDEES :

Community Members:

Deborah Mathews Waldecker

Buddy Mordbito

Pinellas County:

John Bishop

William Hageman

Zach Westfall

Florida Department of Environmental Protection:

Crystal Boutwell

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

Dana Gentry

Mark Mosher

Luke Haber

Brianne Clark

Tamela Kinsey

Mark Marini

Kelly Longberg

Richard Perry

Contractors for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

Susan Burtnett, Arcadis

Heidi Syed, Cogent Legal Services (Court Reporter)

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1 (Thereupon, the following proceedings were had:)

2 MS. GENTRY: Good evening, everyone, and
3 welcome. My name is Dana Gentry. I'm the U.S. Army
4 Corps of Engineers Project Manager for the Pinellas
5 Air-to-Ground Gun Range Formerly Used Defense Site
6 project, located in Pinellas County, Florida. We're
7 glad you're here tonight to learn about the Proposed
8 Plan. This meeting is a crucial part of the
9 Formerly Used Defense Site process. We've
10 investigated the site, assessed the risks, and
11 developed a Proposed Plan outlining the preferred
12 path forward.

13 Tonight, we'll present the plan, explain how it
14 was developed, and discuss what it means for the
15 community. We are here to answer your questions and
16 listen to your feedback. At the end of the
17 presentation we've prepared for you, we encourage
18 you to actively participate in this important
19 process. We'll begin with a brief video, followed
20 by a question-and-answer session.

21 (Video recording played, initially without sound)

22 MS. WEST-BARNHILL: --where you found the link
23 to this meeting and download the fact sheets
24 associated with the Proposed Plan. This includes
25 the program summary, Munitions Response Site

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1 Prioritization Protocol fact sheet, the Proposed
2 Plan fact sheet, as well as the comment form. The
3 agenda for our presentation is shown here. There
4 will be an opportunity for you to ask questions and
5 provide comments at the end of this presentation, as
6 well as throughout the public comment period.
7 There's a number in the upper right-hand corner of
8 each slide, so if you have a question or comment
9 about a particular slide, be sure to include that
10 number when you submit your question or comment.
11 Now I'm going to turn the presentation over to the
12 Project Manager, Dana Gentry.

13 MS. GENTRY: Thank you, Donna. Hello, everyone.
14 My name is Dana Gentry, and I am a U.S. Army Corps
15 of Engineers Project Manager with the Formerly Used
16 Defense Sites Program, or, as it's commonly referred
17 to, FUDS Program. The FUDS Program is a critical
18 initiative managed by the U.S. Army Corps of
19 Engineers. Our mission is to address the
20 environmental legacy of properties, like this one,
21 that were formally owned, leased, or used by the
22 Department of Defense and transferred before October
23 17th, 1986. The program aims to eliminate or reduce
24 unacceptable risks to human health and the
25 environment from the remnants of past military

1 activities.

2 Congress enacted the Comprehensive
3 Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability
4 Act, commonly known as CERCLA, to perform
5 environmental cleanups. CERCLA also provides the
6 framework and authority for the U.S. Army Corps of
7 Engineers FUDS Program to perform munitions cleanup
8 activities. The following flow chart illustrates
9 the CERCLA process, which involves several phases.
10 I will walk you through the steps leading to the
11 Proposed Plan phase that we are currently in.

12 First, we conduct a Preliminary Assessment
13 where a team will investigate a suspected site
14 through document research and determine if further
15 inspection is needed. Then, if the Preliminary
16 Assessment raises any red flags, we undertake a
17 Site Inspection. This involves doing more
18 research and going to the site to find indicators
19 that munitions may be there. When a Site
20 Inspection shows indicators of munitions, we
21 conduct a Remedial Investigation. This is a
22 thorough investigation to determine the exact
23 nature and extent of the munitions at the site.
24 We assess the risks to human health and the
25 environment, and we gather all the data needed to

1 evaluate different cleanup options.

2 Once we understand the size of the site and
3 the associated risks, then we develop and evaluate
4 various cleanup alternatives. This is called a
5 Feasibility Study. In this phase, we consider how
6 effective each option would be, how much it would
7 cost, and how practical it is to implement. The
8 current phase in the process is the Proposed Plan
9 phase. After evaluating the different cleanup
10 alternatives, we identify a preferred alternative
11 and present it to the community for comments to
12 make sure it aligns with the public's priorities
13 and concerns in the area. This is needed in order
14 to make a final decision. We are here to listen
15 and work together to ensure the community's
16 concerns are addressed. This is why your feedback
17 on the preferred alternative is a crucial part of
18 the process.

19 This map showcases the Pinellas Air-to-Ground
20 Gun Range that the military used from 1943 to 1947
21 for training purposes. It is comprised of two
22 separate areas, the smaller near-shore gunnery range
23 depicted by the dashed yellow line, and the larger
24 anti-aircraft gunnery range in the dashed pink line.
25 It's interesting to note that the boundary fans out

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1 over the water because the anti-aircraft guns
2 located on the beach were designed to engage a wide
3 range of targets, including high-flying aircraft and
4 potentially low-flying aircraft, which requires a
5 large arc of coverage.

6 The smaller northern area was used by Pinellas
7 Army Airfield air crews as an air-to-ground gunnery
8 range with practice bombs and rockets dropped or
9 fired at targets on the beach or near the shore.
10 For reference, the Pinellas Army Airfield became
11 what is now St. Pete-Clearwater International
12 Airport. The larger area was used by soldiers from
13 Drew Field for similar training. However, the
14 soldiers fired machine guns from the beach at
15 targets towed over the Gulf. The munitions used in
16 this area were limited to small arms ammunition.
17 Over time, Drew Field has evolved into what we now
18 know as Tampa International Airport, one of the
19 busiest airports in Florida.

20 As you can see, several reports have been
21 written documenting the site. All the reports
22 listed here are available on the Pinellas project
23 website, the same website you used to find the link
24 to this meeting. You can also find paper copies of
25 the documents at the Largo Public Library. Once

1 again, we encourage you to participate in this
2 important process. Your feedback is crucial as we
3 move forward.

4 I will now turn the presentation over to the
5 next speaker. Susan.

6 MS. BURTNETT: Thank you, Dana.
7 Hi, everyone. I'm Susan Burtnett, the Project
8 Manager for the contractor, Arcadis, who completed
9 the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study for
10 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I'm going to walk
11 you through the Remedial Investigation and, then,
12 the Feasibility Study for the Pinellas Air-to-Ground
13 Gun Range. The goal for the Remedial Investigation
14 was to determine if there are environmental impacts
15 associated with the former military use of the two
16 ranges that Dana talked about. We also evaluated
17 potential risks to people and the environment, and
18 looked at whether there was a need for further
19 action.

20 For the Remedial Investigation, our work
21 included reviewing and evaluating previous U.S. Army
22 Corps of Engineers reports, such as the two shown on
23 this slide, analyzing historical documents and
24 studies from other organizations, and assessing
25 potential risks.

1 This slide shows the air-to-ground gunnery
2 range outlined in the yellow dashed line where
3 pilots trained by firing at targets over the Gulf,
4 as Dana explained. The Nearshore Area, outlined by
5 the pink line, corresponds with the target area. In
6 1975 and 1986, the U.S. Navy searched and removed
7 munitions from the black hatched area. We'll talk
8 more about this on the next slide. The U.S. Navy
9 removed 163 munitions in 1975 and 1986. As I noted,
10 items were found in the black hatched area within
11 the Nearshore Area, which is represented by the pink
12 box. This is where the past munitions use occurred.
13 Most items found were identified as practice rockets
14 with no explosives. The U.S. Navy did identify a
15 few rockets as high-explosive. Munitions were only
16 found in the Nearshore Area, and none were found in
17 the remaining marine area. The U.S. Air Force
18 removed a practice bomb from land in 1993.
19 Munitions debris from what was noted as a small
20 practice bomb was removed in 1995. These are the
21 only two occurrences of munitions found on land,
22 which were discovered during development of the
23 area.

24 This slide shows some examples of the types of
25 munitions found at the air-to-ground gunnery range.

1 On the upper left, there is a photograph of a 2.25-
2 inch sub-caliber aircraft rocket, which is a
3 practice rocket. The lower left photograph shows a
4 4.5-inch aircraft rocket. This can be high-
5 explosive. On the top right, there are three types
6 of small practice bombs. The munitions debris shown
7 in the lower right photograph is a good example of
8 how munitions often look different when they are
9 found years after they were fired or dropped.

10 In summary, the Remedial Investigation
11 concluded that, for the air-to-ground gunnery range,
12 no munitions have been found or reported in the
13 marine area since 1986, or on land since 1995, 30
14 years ago. Munitions could potentially remain in
15 the Nearshore Area, and there is no evidence of
16 environmental concerns from munitions.

17 Now, we are going to talk about the second
18 range, the anti-aircraft gunnery range. Dana had
19 explained that soldiers use this range to fire
20 machine guns from the beach at targets in the Gulf.
21 Only small arms ammunition was used at the anti-
22 aircraft gunnery range, which is outlined by the
23 pink-dashed line. Based on the Remedial
24 Investigation findings, it was confirmed that only
25 small arms ammunition was used. Some expended

1 casings were found on the beach in the past and
2 removed. Expended small arms ammunition does not
3 pose an explosive hazard. There is no evidence of
4 other munitions use at this range, and there is no
5 evidence of environmental concerns from munitions.

6 In conclusion, the Remedial Investigation found
7 that there is no unacceptable risk in the Remaining
8 Areas, shown in blue on this figure. The Remaining
9 Areas include the land and water areas other than
10 the Nearshore Area. For the Remaining Areas, no
11 action is needed since there is no unacceptable
12 risk. For the Nearshore Area, the small area shown
13 in the figure in light blue, a Feasibility Study was
14 recommended to identify and evaluate remedial
15 alternatives, since it is possible munitions could
16 remain. The Nearshore Area includes the beach and
17 water within the light blue area.

18 I am now going to talk about the Feasibility
19 Study that was completed for the Nearshore Area.
20 The Feasibility Study is a process used to develop
21 and screen remedial action alternatives. It
22 provides for detailed analysis of the most promising
23 options. These options are evaluated based on nine
24 criteria. The Feasibility Study establishes the
25

1 basis for selecting a remedy. Three remedial action
2 alternatives were developed and evaluated for the
3 Nearshore Area. These include a no-action
4 alternative, which was evaluated as a baseline, and
5 is the option where no actions or changes would
6 occur. The second alternative, land use controls,
7 would use signs, like the existing sign at the park
8 shown on this slide, to warn people that munitions
9 may remain at the Nearshore Area. Under this
10 alternative, additional signs would be added at
11 beach access ways, and information would be made
12 available to Pinellas County, the City of Belleair
13 Beach, local authorities such as the police and
14 firefighters, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard. The
15 third alternative involves finding and removing
16 munitions, if present, in the Nearshore Area,
17 including on the beach and in the water. The
18 photograph on the lower right of the slide shows a
19 diver looking for munitions underwater. This option
20 would have the most disturbance, and steps would be
21 needed to protect the environment, including sea
22 turtles who nest on the beach.

23 In evaluating the three alternatives in the
24 Feasibility Study, it was determined that the first
25

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1 alternative, no action, is not protective. The land
2 use controls alternative, which includes signs and
3 public awareness materials, was found to be
4 protective, implementable, and provides less
5 disturbance than the removal action alternative.
6 The third alternative, removal action, includes
7 searching for and removing munitions. It is
8 protective, however, it is less implementable, has
9 greater disturbance within the Nearshore Area, and
10 is the most costly. Based on these findings, Donna
11 West-Barnhill with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
12 is now going to talk to you about the preferred
13 alternative and the Proposed Plans.

14 DONNA: Thank you, Susan. The Proposed Plans
15 summarize the Remedial Investigation and the
16 Feasibility Study. They're designed to be short and
17 easy to read. We also have a fact sheet on the
18 Proposed Plans that summarizes the actual Proposed
19 Plans. So be sure to download the fact sheet, as
20 well as the plans from the project website where you
21 found the link to this meeting. One of the purposes
22 of the Proposed Plan is to encourage public
23 participation, and to get the community to provide
24 information. We want to hear your opinion on the
25 preferred alternative, and if you have information

1 that we should know about, as we evaluate and select
2 the final remedial action.

3 As Susan mentioned, we didn't find any risk
4 associated with the military's training in the
5 Remaining Areas. So the preferred alternative in
6 the Proposed Plan is no action. For the Nearshore
7 Area, where there is the potential for munitions to
8 be present, the preferred alternative is land use
9 controls in the form of public awareness, as Susan
10 described when she presented the information about
11 the Feasibility Study. In addition to the existing
12 sign we have at Morgan Park, that's shown on the
13 figure with the gold star, we'll add signs at other
14 beach access points, and they're shown on the
15 figure with the dark blue or black stars. We
16 encourage you to comment on these preferred
17 alternatives throughout the comment period, which
18 runs from April 29th to May 30th, and we'll explain
19 how to do so on the next slide.

20 The Department of Defense uses a tool known as
21 the Munitions Response Site Prioritization
22 Protocol. There's a fact sheet about the protocol
23 on the project website where you found the link to
24 this meeting. The tool includes a number of tables
25 that are used to evaluate the risk to people and

1 and the environment. The scores can be numbers one
2 through eight, or alternative ratings of no known or
3 suspected hazard or no longer required. One
4 indicates that it is the highest risk. The score
5 for the Nearshore Area is a four, and the Remaining
6 Area is no known or suspected hazard. You may
7 comment on the scoring in addition to the Proposed
8 Plans. Things that we would like to know would be
9 if you have information we should consider in
10 evaluating the priorities, such as land use, or
11 maybe you found something that you think we should
12 know about.

13 Your opinion really does count and we do want
14 to hear from you whether it's on the Munitions
15 Response Site Prioritization Protocol scores or the
16 Proposed Plans and the preferred alternatives. If
17 you have information that you think we should
18 consider as we evaluate the remedial alternative or
19 the scoring, please be sure to submit that
20 information to us. You can call us toll-free at the
21 number shown here on the slide, email it to the
22 address shown here, or you can submit your comments
23 through the mail. You can download the comment form
24 from the project website, fill it out, and email
25

1 that to us. Or, you can mail it, but if you do so
2 please be sure that it is postmarked by May 30th.

3 The project documents that we've talked about
4 in the presentation are available at the Largo
5 Public Library. They're also posted on the project
6 website where you found the link to this meeting.
7 Feel free to call us or email us if you have
8 questions or any further information.

9 We close all of our presentations with a
10 reminder about the three Rs of explosive safety:
11 recognize, retreat, report. Whether you're within a
12 known Formally Use Defense Site or anywhere across
13 the state, the military trained extensively. So
14 it's important that you recognize if you find an
15 item that you cannot identify, especially if it has
16 a pointed nose or fins, the item could be dangerous.
17 Retreat from the area without touching or kicking
18 it, but do make note of its location and report it
19 by calling 911.

20 Thank you for watching the video and
21 participating in our meeting. We look forward to
22 hearing from you.

23 (Video recording stopped.)
24
25

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1 MS. GENTRY: Thank you for listening to our
2 presentation. We are ready to take questions and
3 comments from you. I see Buddy has a question.

4
5 BUDDY: I'm here.

6 MS. GENTRY: Hi.

7 BUDDY: Hi. Thanks for taking my question.
8 So at some point in the near future, the Corps of
9 Engineers in Pinellas County will get an agreement
10 to do shore renourishment. Is that going to change
11 any of the information that you just presented?

12 MS. BURTNETT: Dana, I'm happy to answer
13 Buddy's question.

14 MS. GENTRY: Okay, thank you.

15 MS. BURTNETT: Hi, Buddy. I'm Susan Burtnett.
16 I spoke in the middle of our presentation and I can
17 turn my camera on here for you. Thank you for asking
18 the question.

19 We did consider beach nourishment because it's
20 been going on for quite some time, since, I believe,
21 1998, and it definitely helps keep sand along the
22 beach. Because we do get impacted by storms like we
23 did last year, things do change, so we did consider
24 the sands that are placed as part of the beach
25 nourishment projects and how they change over time.

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1 We also looked at how this could affect the
2 availability for people to interact with the
3 munitions if beach nourishment projects were delayed

4 BUDDY: Right.

5 MS. BURTNETT: -- and if they were no longer
6 done. It is also important to note that beach
7 nourishment is not part of the Formally Used Defense
8 Sites program, so it is outside the realm of this
9 particular project. But we did include information
10 about it, and I would point you to the Feasibility
11 Study that has good information and details about our
12 evaluation. In an appendix of the Feasibility Study,
13 we included information about the past beach
14 nourishment activities that have taken place.

15 BUDDY: Thank you.

16
17 MS. GENTRY: Does anyone else have any
18 questions? Comments? Okay.

19 Well, thank you all, for to attending tonight's
20 meeting and for your question. We appreciate your
21 engagement in this important process. Your input on
22 the Proposed Plan is valuable, and we'll carefully
23 consider the comments received during the public
24 comment period that extends to May 30th.

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1 After the public comment period closes, we will
2 review and address all comments received and finalize
3 the Decision Document. We will notify the public
4 when the final decision is made and make the Decision
5 Document available on the project website, as well as
6 at the Largo Public Library.

7 Thank you, again, for your participation. We
8 look forward to continuing to work with you as we
9 move forward with this very important project. Enjoy
10 your evening.

11
12 BUDDY: Good job, and thank you.

13 MS. BURTNETT: Thank you.

14 MS. GENTRY: Thank you.

15
16 (Meeting concluded at 6:29 p.m.)
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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER


STATE OF FLORIDA

COUNTY OF PINELLAS

I, Heidi Syed, Court Reporter, certify that I was authorized to and did report the meeting for the Pinellas Air-to-Ground Gun Range Proposed Plan; and that the transcript is a true and correct record of my notes.

I further certify that I am not a relative, employee, attorney, or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorneys or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

Dated this 9th day of May, 2025.



Heidi Syed, Court Reporter