



# Environmental Justice at Military Superfund Sites

## The Former Fort Ord: A Case Study

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# The Fort Ord Environmental Justice Network (FOEJN)



- The Fort Ord Environmental Justice Network (FOEJN) was formed in 1995, as an outgrowth of community concerns over the cleanup and reuse efforts of the former Fort Ord Army Base.
- Fort Ord is one such site, which is in a highly populated area, as large as the City of San Francisco in Acreage.
- USEPA has proclaimed Fort Ord as the second most contaminated facility in US.

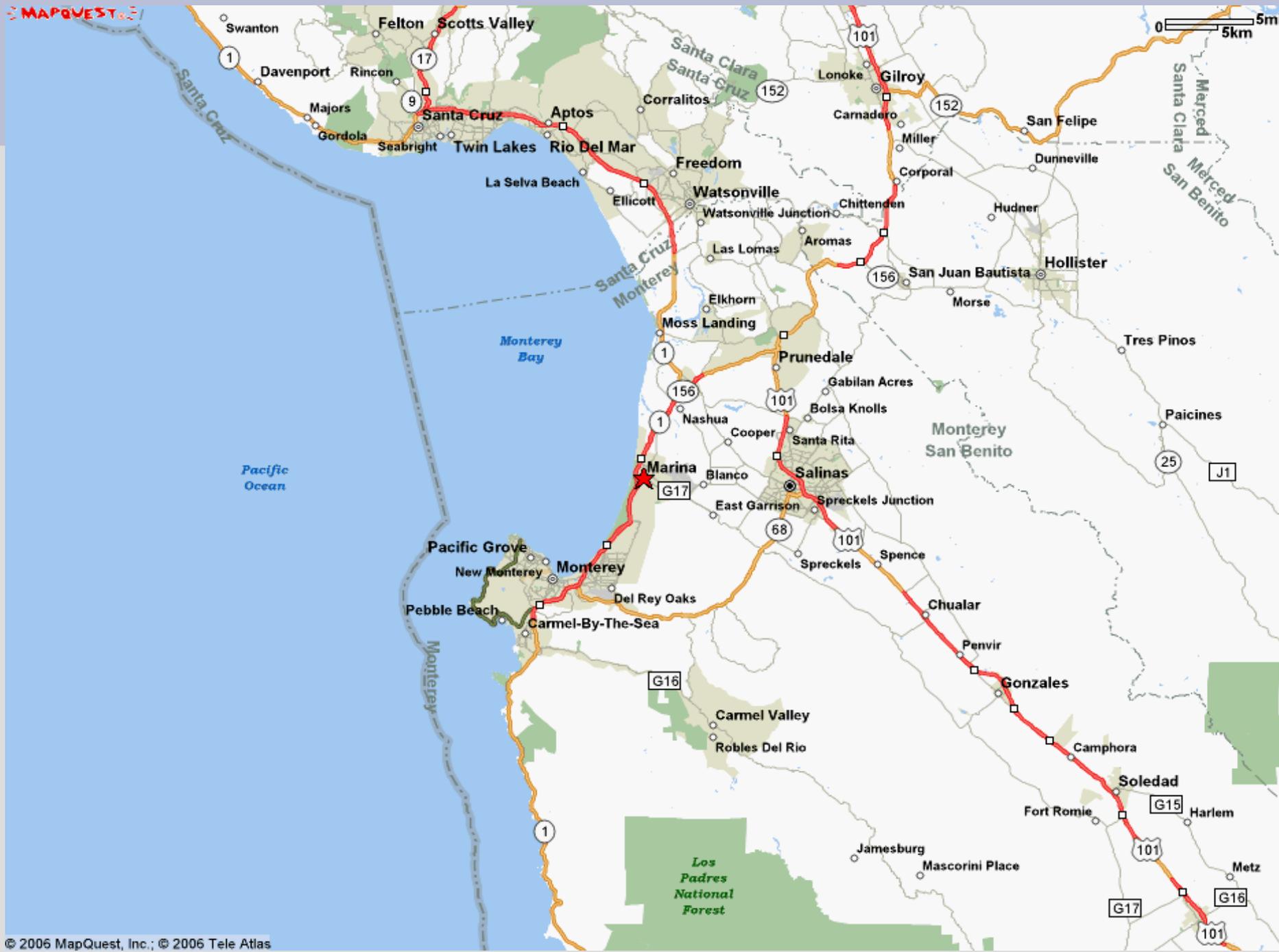


# Environmental Justice: A Brief History



- 1982: Captured national attention when a demonstration took place against a hazardous waste landfill in Warren County, North Carolina, a county comprised predominately of African-Americans.
- 1994: President Clinton issued an Executive Order (SB 12898) requiring government at all levels to achieve environmental justice by addressing disproportionately high and adverse environmental health & economic effects on people of color and low-income populations
- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision making processes.

# Fort Ord, Monterey Bay California



# History of Fort Ord



- Established in 1917 and was closed in 1994

- Fort Ord was a training ground for soldiers preparing to serve in WW1, WW2, Korean, Viet Nam Wars, Persian Gulf, Operation Just Cause and other military actions.



Machine Guns

Fort Ord, California

- All 28,000 acres of the former Fort Ord were added to the National Priorities List (Superfund) in 1990 fence-line to fence-line



# On Going Clean Up Concerns Community Health



## **Ground Water Contamination**

- Organic contaminants such as trichloroethene (TCE) are present in 3 plumes that run through 2 aquifers, primarily as a result of landfiling and other Army activities.

## **Air Pollution**

- Prescribed burns have exposed local communities to dioxins and respiratory irritants and escaped the control of the Army, further endangering citizens

## **Soil Contamination**

- Lead, copper, and antimony contaminate small arms ranges across the base. Shell casings litter the beaches and in some areas cover greater than 10% of the ground surface. Peeling lead paint from buildings also contribute to the problem

# Munitions and Explosives of Concern



# Out of Control Burns, 2003

## Fort Ord: Afternoon blaze sends smoke across Salinas Valley BRUSH FIRE CHARS 700 ACRES



A Salinas-based firefighter starts a backfire near the Fort Ord base on Thursday. A sign marks a spot in the area.

By G. BRADY BROWN  
A fire started in a brush field in a field west of Fort Ord on Thursday morning that charred 700 acres of brush and killed 100 acres of timber, according to a report from the Salinas Valley Fire Department.

The fire, which started about 3 p.m. on Thursday, was the largest and most intense brush fire in the Salinas Valley since the 1990s, according to the Salinas Valley Fire Department.

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## Health Effects

- Asthma
- Cancer
- Coughing
- Respiratory distress, chest pains
- Rashes
- Dioxin exposure
- Burning eyes
- Mucus build-up

# Landfills and Groundwater



- Multiple landfills were combined into a 150+ acre landfill with no liner
- (VOC) volatile organic compounds such as PCE and TCE are leaking from the landfill site contaminating groundwater
- 2 other groundwater plumes resulting from Army activities have been discovered on base
- Plumes have migrated outside the Fort Ord Boundaries

# Soil Contamination



- Small arms training was conducted during the entire time the base was operational
- Some ranges literally covered with spent shells
- Has resulted in extreme concentrations of lead, copper, and antimony in on base soils
- Cleanup efforts have been largely unsuccessful

# The Economics of Environmental Injustice



- Communities around Fort Ord are composed of predominately low income residents and people of color- falls under the EJ Executive Order BUT:



- The community has not been engaged during reuse planning
- Proposed development centered on high income uses (expensive housing, golf courses, etc)
- Local contractors not being used for onsite work
- The proposed reuse of the base benefits those impacted by its contamination the least

# Keys to Economic Revitalization



- Affordable Housing
  - Small Business Development
  - Meaningful Job Creation
  - Sustainable economic and community development
- All will help maintain community character and benefit local residents

# Ongoing Community Challenges At Federal Facilities

- Meeting the basic needs of the community, according to Environmental Justice Regulations, SB12898
- Availability of safe and affordable housing
- Livable wage job development & training for impacted local residents
- Lack of resources
- Lack of affordable medical facilities



# The Need for Environmental Health Clinics

- FOEJN believes that an environmental health center & clinic should take priority at all military and Superfund sites
- FOEJN is working to establish such a Facility at Fort Ord



# Priorities for 2007

- FOEJN continues to stress the importance of implementing the rules and intent of the Environmental Justice Resolution SB12898
- DOD, USEPA, State agencies, Local government, Universities should incorporate the Principles of environmental justice with a plan to implement the resolution.
- Develop legislation to give Constitutional strength to SB12898.

# Fort Ord Environmental Justice Network, Inc.

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