

COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN

FORT MCCLELLAN, ALABAMA

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FOR

REISZ ENGINEERS

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Community Relations Plan (CRP) is prepared for Fort McClellan, (FMC) Alabama to outline a site specific program to establish and maintain effective community involvement in the decision-making process of ongoing actions relative to the Department of Defense (DOD) Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) environmental activities. The CRP establishes timely information exchange between various U.S. Army, Federal, State, county, city agencies, community fraternal, educational and civic organizations, and the general public. The public will have available information associated with the U.S. Army's Installation Restoration Program (IRP) as well as data of historical /buildings areas, archaeological sites; natural resource and environmental issues, underground/above ground storage tanks (UST/AST), Landfills and Unexploded Ordnance. Public involvement begins during the facility investigations and continues through the final decisions. Citizens are encouraged to become involved by attending public meetings such as the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), reviewing information available in the local repositories, and submitting ideas to either the FMC Point of Contact (POC) or one of the community representatives on the RAB. The address and telephone number of the FMC POC and a list of the RAB members are present in Appendix B. Additional community involvement activities are discussed in Section 5 of this CRP.

The CRP provides for interaction within the community and encourages effective communication by identifying specific methods of information dissemination, public involvement and proactive techniques. It summarizes community insight and opinion into perceptions within the community regarding past, present, and future activities at FMC. The CRP was prepared using guidance in *Community Relations in Superfund: A Handbook* (USEPA 1992). It will be implemented according to protocols attendant with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act (DBCRA) of 1990.

The revised CRP was prepared by J. McKinney Associates for Reisz Engineers under Contract DABT02-96-D-005. AA15-91-D-0042, to the Environmental Office, Fort McClellan, Alabama 36205.

Community interviews were conducted March and April of 1996 to assess public interest in the environmental programs and to identify issues of concern, interested individuals and groups, and potential communication avenues for maintaining an ongoing dialogue with members of the community. The purpose of these interviews was to identify the concerns of the local publics, identify those areas that need response and to determine public involvement in decisions regarding environmental restoration activities at FMC. Information obtained through the community interviews is summarized in Section 4.

An additional community survey was conducted during June and July of 1999 to determine interest within the community of the ongoing cleanup process. Most importantly, however, was to identify where the local public obtained their information and whether they felt they were getting it in a timely and credible fashion. Information obtained through this survey is also summarized in Section 4.

This CRP summarizes the opinions obtained from both the community interviews and survey and provides recommendations for community relations activities and potential means of communication vehicles that FMC can consider in the development of a proactive community outreach program.

2. SITE BACKGROUND

This section summarizes background information on the operational history of Fort McClellan and Pelham Range and provides additional information regarding the areas of concern on the Post and the environmental programs under which these areas of concern will be mitigated. Background information pertinent to Fort McClellan was obtained from U.S. Army Environmental Center (USAEC) project files, U.S. Army Internet resources, and information obtained from Fort McClellan records and documentation. The background information includes details of the current facilities, site descriptions, regulatory history, and prior environmental activities and investigations. The environmental program information describes the BRAC NEPA process and summarizes the roles and responsibilities of the Army, installation, and community participants.

2.1 POST DESCRIPTION

Fort McClellan is located in northeastern Alabama in Calhoun County, approximately 60 miles northeast of Birmingham, approximately 110 miles northeast of Montgomery, and approximately 90 miles west of Atlanta, Georgia. It is in central time zone. The city of Anniston adjoins the main installation on the south and west. The city of Weaver is located approximately 1 mile northwest of the Main Post, and the city of Oxford is approximately 5 miles south of Anniston. The Morrisville Maneuver Area, or Pelham Range, is located approximately 5 miles due west of the Main Post and adjoins the Anniston Army Depot along its northern boundary. Fort McClellan consists of 45,679 acres of Government-owned and leased land situated in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains of northeast Alabama.

The Main Post included administrative, medical, mission, housing, recreation areas and commercial buildings. A DOD elementary school was co-located in one of the housing areas. Training areas on the Main Post were utilized for smoke training exercises, hand grenade training, machine gun training, anti-terrorist training, explosive ordnance disposal training, and military police training. The U.S. Army also developed and utilized state-of-the-art chemical disposal, chemical detection training, and chemical decontamination training facilities, on Main Post. The Center of Domestic Preparedness, (CDP), a Department of Justice (DOJ) training facility, is now using some of these facilities. Adjoining the Main Post to the east is the Choccolocco Corridor, which is leased to the Federal Government by the Alabama State Legislature, and provides an access corridor from the Main Post to the Talladega National Forest. Much of this area is under consideration to be designated a National Wildlife Refuge. The size of each main parcel is as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| • Main Post | 18,946 acres |
| • Pelham Range | 22,245 acres |
| • Choccolocco Corridor (leased) | 4,488 acres |
| • Total (approximate) | 45,679 acres |

2.1.1 Ownership and Operational History

Anniston, Alabama began as a private company town. It was established soon after the War Between the States and was built up by the Woodstock Iron Company under the direction of two wealthy northern industrialists. The rich beds of hematite ore and the extensive forests provided an ideal location to build an iron manufacturing business. The charcoal furnaces were very productive which led to the construction of the town, attracting related industries, and the construction of a railroad to connect Anniston with regional markets. Anniston, Alabama was described as a model city and a progressive southern town structured by industry. Anniston was privately owned until 1883, at which time it was opened to the public although The Woodstock Iron Company continued to subsidize some city services. Anniston enjoyed growth and prosperity until the 1890s when the "panic" of 1893 struck, followed by a depression (New South Associates 1993).

Although the Spanish-American War ended in August of 1898, a peace agreement had not been reached. Recognizing the possibility of renewed hostilities, the U.S. Army decided to maintain a force and Anniston was selected as a prime site. The rail connections to Mobile, along with the political pressure applied by Anniston's residents on influential members of Congress, were contributing factors in this decision. Camp Shipp was established north of Anniston on Blue Mountain. As more regiments arrived, the boundaries of the camp expanded. The Choccolocco Mountains, which formed a bowl around the eastern edge, provided a perfect bowl for artillery training for the Fourth Alabama Artillery. Anniston returned its attention to industry and began to thrive economically. Iron manufacturing, however, was replaced by textile manufacturing and pipe making (New South Associates 1993).

In 1912, a congressman from Alabama's Fourth District spurred the War Department to utilize the Choccolocco Mountains as a site for artillery training. Twenty thousand National Guardsmen were brought to the valley for maneuvers in response to the congressman's urging. The President of the Army War College and the head of the Artillery Bureau of the War College also were enthusiastic about the adaptability of the terrain for artillery training and became advocates for the purchase of the land. In 1917, the federal government decided to acquire 18,952 acres north of Anniston from local farmers for use as an artillery range (New South Associates 1993).

It appeared the U.S. would be entering WWI, however, money had not been appropriated by Congress for this purchase and the property could not be bought. Recognizing the desperate need for the artillery training and displaying pride and patriotism, the Anniston Chamber of Commerce initiated a fund drive, and in three days, raised \$247,000 to pay the farmers for their land. The acquisition was completed March 17, 1917, however because the land would not be used for several months, the farmers were permitted to grow and harvest their crops that season. The local chamber then gave the property to the War Department with very liberal repayment terms. Thus began the harmonious attitude and cooperative spirit that prevailed throughout the history of the region and the U.S. Army at Ft McClellan.

With the outbreak of World War I, the property (Camp McClellan) was used to train troops for participation in World War I and served in that capacity until the Armistice. At the end of World War I, the Post was designated as a demobilization center until 1919 when Camp McClellan served as a training area for active Army units and other civilian elements. Camp McClellan was redesignated as Fort McClellan in 1929 and continued to serve as a training area.

The Federal Government acquired an additional 22,245 acres (Pelham Range) west of Fort McClellan in 1940. In 1941, the Alabama Legislature leased approximately 4,488 acres to the Federal Government to provide an access corridor from the Main Post to Talladega National Forest. This corridor provided access to additional woodlands for training and maneuvers. Between 1945 and 1946, Fort McClellan served as a personnel separation point. After a 3-month period of closure, the Post was activated as a Recruit Training Center until May 1947 when it ceased operation and was placed in an inactive status until 1951.

The U.S. Army reactivated Fort McClellan in January 1951 to operate the Chemical Corps School and as a replacement center for the Chemical Corps. The Chemical Corps School offered advanced training in all phases of chemical, biological, and radiological (CBR) warfare to students from all branches of the military service until the school was deactivated in 1973. The Army Combat Development Command Chemical/Biological Radiological Agency moved to Fort McClellan in 1962 and performed its mission until it also was deactivated in 1973.

Concurrent with the Chemical Corps School occupancy, plans were also developed in 1951 to move the WAC Center and School to Fort McClellan and designate it as the permanent home of the Women's Army Corps. Construction of new buildings for the WAC was completed in 1954 and officially dedicated on September 27, 1954. The WAC remained at Fort McClellan until it was disestablished in 1978.

The mission of the installation was changed in 1966 and Fort McClellan was renamed the U.S. Army School/Training Center and Fort McClellan. The 3rd Army Non-Commissioned Officers Academy was also stationed at Fort McClellan from 1967 to 1972. Ongoing activities at Fort McClellan can be divided into support activities, academic training, and practical training. Support activities include housing, providing sustenance, and moving individuals during training. Academic training includes classroom, laboratory, and field instruction. Practical training encompasses weapons, artillery and explosives, vehicle operation and maintenance, and physical and tactical training activities.

Prior to closing on September 30, 1999, FMC was a U.S. Army Garrison Command (USAG) under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and Forces Command (FORSCOM). The installation housed three major organizations, including the U.S. Army Military Police School (USAMPS), the U.S. Army Chemical School (USAMCLS) and the Training Center (under the direction of the Training Brigade) in addition to other support units and tenants. Additionally, FMC was a multi-service training center housing the U.S. Navy Chemical, Biological, and Radiological Defense and Disaster Preparedness School, the U.S. Air Force Civil Engineer Disaster Preparedness School, training of U.S. Marine military police and nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) specialists, and also served as a training facility for U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard units. The USAG functioned as the headquarters for the installation and provided command and control for all assigned and attached units. Headquarters and Headquarters Company, the 14th Army Band, the 142nd Ordnance Detachment (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), and the DOD Polygraph Institute also were part of the USAG.

2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

2.2.1 *The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)*

NEPA is a federal statute that requires the identification and analysis of potential environmental impacts of certain proposed federal actions and alternatives before those actions are initiated. The law also contains specific requirements for informing and involving the public.

The passage of NEPA legislated a structured approach to environmental impact analysis in the planning of federal agency programs and projects. NEPA's stated purpose is "to declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and resources important to the Nation; and to establish a Council on Environmental Quality."

NEPA requires that all federal agencies "include in every recommendation or report on proposals for legislation and other major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment" a detailed statement on impacts, irreversible effects, alternatives to the action, long-term environmental impacts, and irretrievable commitments of resources. NEPA is a "full disclosure" law with provisions for public access to and full public participation in the federal decision-making process.

The process for implementing the law is codified in the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508. The U.S. Army Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) NEPA process is designed to develop high-quality decisions that are based on a clear understanding of environmental consequences and to take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment. It is a fundamental management-support mechanism involving:

- ***Pre-decision analysis*** - A forecast tool that informs the decision maker and also afford the public the opportunity to provide information relevant to the decision.

- **Post-decision management** - A requirement to measure actual performance against desired goals and objectives.

The process is accomplished by:

- Integrating other environmental requirements
- Involving the public
- Identifying associated effects
- Operating on the principle of "full disclosure"
- Analyzing relevant technical information
- Documenting analyses, their results, and decisions resulting from them
- Summarizing technical information for the public and the decision maker
- Identifying a preferred course of action
- Designing and implementing mitigation and monitoring.

2.2.2 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)

The Base Closure and Realignment Acts of 1988 and 1990 (Public Laws 100-526 and 101-510) require the U.S. Army (and other branch services) to implement the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission's (DBCRC) decisions for base realignment and closure. The Acts also require the Army to consider the environmental consequences of the implementation proposal with respect to the provisions of NEPA prior to implementation of DBCRC decisions regarding closure. The BRAC environmental restoration program was established in 1989, when the first round of base closures (BRAC I) was announced. Since 1989, subsequent rounds of base realignments and closures have been identified every 2 years. The BRAC environmental restoration program is patterned after the U.S. Army's Installation Restoration Program (IRP), but has been expanded to include other categories of contaminants that are not normally addressed under the IRP. These include asbestos, radon, unexploded ordnance (UXO), and lead-based paint programs.

The 1995 BRAC program affected 146 domestic military installations including 40 Department of the Army (DA) facilities for closure or realignment. As a result of the decision to close Fort McClellan, the

Army is obligated to investigate the environmental status of former Post property (e.g., all of Pelham Range and parts of McClellan) to be designated for surplus to civilian control or for realignment to other government branch services or agencies. The Army is similarly obligated to mitigate identified environmental contamination prior to the transfer of the surplus property.

U.S. Army installations typically include unique natural and cultural resources, and the U.S. Army is also responsible for ensuring the preservation of these resources as installations are transferred to others. The U.S. Army has the authority to dispose of facilities after they have been designated by the BRAC Commission for closure and for ensuring that the future use of installation property is not compromised by a potential environmental hazard. The U.S. Army seeks to involve local communities, government officials, land use planners, and special interest groups in making decisions that will be of benefit to the communities affected by closure. It is important that public involvement be an ongoing process as the environmental cleanup and property reuse activities proceed so that alternative cleanup options are considered from all points of view and decisions are made with the open involvement of an informed public.

The environmental cleanup and property reuse program begins by conducting an Environmental Baseline Study (EBS). The EBS describes the environmental condition of the property and is used to determine the suitability for the lease or transfer of excess BRAC property. The Final EBS for FMC is completed and available for public review at the Information Repositories at both the Anniston/Calhoun Public Library in Anniston, AL and the Houston Cole Library at Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama.

The *Base Reuse Implementation Manual* (DOD 1995) and the *Base Realignment and Closure Manual for Compliance with NEPA* (DA 1995) summarize the DOD philosophy and goals for base closure, which include:

- Close bases quickly, but in a manner that will preserve valuable assets to support rapid reuse and redevelopment.
- Give high priority to local economic redevelopment.
- Put available property to productive use as quickly as possible

- Expedite the screening process
- Fast-track environmental cleanup by removing needless delays while protecting human health and the environment.
- Make every reasonable effort to assist the Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA).

According to the *Base Reuse Implementation Manual*, "Environmental programs are emphasized and expedited at closure bases through the BRAC Environmental Process, which includes environmental cleanup actions and other environmental issues that may impact property reuse."

Fort McClellan has undergone extensive scientific studies with the goal of restoration and redevelopment of portions of the land for the local community. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was completed and public scoping meeting and comment periods were conducted. Public participation was encouraged and comments were incorporated into the EIS.

2.2.2.1 Participants, Roles, and Responsibilities

The installation commander has been and will remain the primary environmental steward of the installation throughout the BRAC process. The commander is responsible for compliance with all applicable environmental laws and regulations including those involving public participation (DA 1995).

Although the Army Major Commands (MACOMs) continue to be proponents for NEPA analysis and documentation, it is ultimately up to the installation to keep the entire BRAC program synchronized. The installation supports the MACOM during the BRAC process by furnishing data, keeping the public informed, working with the Local Redevelopment Authorities (LRAs), if appropriate, and conducting special environmental studies required for the NEPA process. In addition to the installation commander, the roles and responsibilities of the major Army participants are described below (DA 1995).

Base Transition Coordinator (BTC)_The BTC is appointed by DOD to be an on-site representative to assist the community in the redevelopment program. The BTC works with the LRA and the installation to develop reuse options and appropriate levels of cleanup. In addition, the BTC monitors the process and

facilitates the interaction of all participants. The BTC also assists the community with organizing the LRA and with securing funds from the Office of Economic Assistance (OEA) (DA 1995).

BRAC Environmental Coordinator (BEC)_The BEC is designated by the MACOM responsible for cleanup and closure of the installation. The BEC facilitates planning and execution of environmental cleanup programs with the installation environmental staff and regulatory agencies and participates in community involvement activities (DA 1995).

Restoration Advisory Board (RAB)_The RAB is the forum for discussion and information exchange about the installation's environmental restoration or cleanup program. It is not a decision-making body, but provides the community an opportunity to provide input to the cleanup process, thereby increasing an understanding of the cleanup program. The installation commander or his designee is the chairperson, and the base environmental coordinator is the co-chairperson. Community members are appointed by local governments and government representatives are appointed by agencies (DA 1995).

Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA)_The community is responsible for establishing an LRA to act as the legal entity for participation by the community in reuse actions. The LRA is responsible for developing and obtaining community approval of a reuse plan for excess Army property. This plan must be provided to the Army in a timely manner for coverage in the NEPA analysis. The LRA must complete this plan within 1 year after the U.S. Army has completed real estate screening of excess property (DA 1995).

BRAC Cleanup Team (BCT)_The BCT is formed to manage environmental programs for BRAC installations. It consists of a U.S. Army installation representative, USEPA region representative, and state environmental management agency representative. The team reviews and oversees environmental cleanup issues, documents, and implementation plans.

2.2.3 Installation Restoration Program

The USEPA Region IV and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) regulators oversee the environmental investigation and remediation efforts in Alabama. With support from other U.S. Army environmental organizations, regulatory oversight, operational and technical oversight of

environmental investigations at Fort McClellan is provided by the Fort McClellan Environmental Office and the US Army Environmental Command and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The IRP includes three major phases consisting of a preliminary assessment/site inspection (PA/SI), a remedial investigation/feasibility study (RI/FS), and remedial design/remedial action (RD/RA). The IRP process may take several years to complete largely because of the iterative nature of site characterization, comprehensive regulatory review, and the need to identify, select, and finance effective remedial actions. The investigative methods used during restoration efforts consist of protocols established by the EPA and the U.S. Army. Following the completion of physical and chemical site characterizations, resolution of detrimental site conditions through remediation is planned and will be implemented in accordance with regulatory guidelines and with the local community's participation.

2.2.3.1 Previous Environmental Studies at Fort McClellan

The environmental programs under which areas of concern at FMC have been investigated and mitigated include the BRAC program, the IRP, and additional compliance programs in place there. These include the Underground and Above Ground Storage Tank (UST/AST) program, National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitted discharges, hazardous waste management, and pollution prevention and control measures.

The U.S. Army Environmental Hygiene Agency (USAEHA) conducted a 2-year investigation into the status and historical use of CBR training areas. A second installation assessment consisting of records reviews, personnel interviews, and field inspections was conducted by the U.S. Army Toxic and Hazardous Material Agency (USATHAMA) in 1977. Various U.S. Army agencies, including the Fort McClellan Chemical School and USAEHA, conducted limited surface soil sampling and screening at several sites between 1972 and 1980. Field testing for chemical warfare agents was negative in all known samplings and the areas were cleared for surface usage. The 1977 installation assessment conducted by USATHAMA was

re-evaluated and integrated with updated data by Environmental Science and Engineering (ES&E) in 1984. This study was limited to chemical agents and restricted compounds and resulted in 21 site-specific contamination assessments.

In 1986, USAEHA conducted an investigation to identify all solid waste management units (SWMUs) at Fort McClellan as required under section 3004 of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Hazardous and Solid Waste amendments (HSWA) of 1984 (USAEHA 1986a). USAEHA formally identified 41 SWMUs on Fort McClellan and Pelham Range. USATHAMA conducted an enhanced PA in 1990 to evaluate the status of active non-CERCLA and inactive CERCLA sites potentially impacting the U.S. Army's planned closure of Fort McClellan. The PA identified 62 active and inactive sites on the Main Post and Pelham Range.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mobile District conducted an investigation in 1991 to evaluate soil and groundwater in the vicinity of five existing or excavated UST sites in the northwestern portion of the Main Post. The investigation focused on USTs used for storing petroleum products, including gasoline, diesel, and diesel-based fuel oil. USAEC (formerly USATHAMA) initiated a SI in 1991 at 17 sites identified in the PA on the Main Post and Pelham Range. A hydrogeological evaluation of the former Fort McClellan sanitary landfill site (Landfill #4) was conducted by the ADEM (1993) as a component of the overall permit review process. Detailed, supplemental RIs were completed at eight areas of concern on the Main Post and four areas of concern on Pelham Range in 1995 (SAIC 1995).

Remediation progress has already been made on several sites at Fort McClellan. In 1994 the last active municipal landfill on Fort McClellan (Landfill #4) was closed in accordance with State of Alabama requirements and capped. Asbestos remediation and radon abatement have taken place and a private well survey was conducted in the fall of 1995 to identify nearby residents using private wells so that future groundwater studies could include that information.

In compliance with BRAC requirements, Fort McClellan has undergone additional environmental investigations to identify and characterize potential contamination resulting from past operations. These investigations were to determine the presence, concentration, and distribution of environmental contaminants; assess human health and ecological risks; identify situations that would require immediate

responses; and prepare recommendations for cleanup. The goals were to facilitate the transfer and redevelopment of portions of the land for the local community. The EBS provides the extensive detail needed to proceed in a timely and proactive way to focus efforts on cleanup actions. The U.S. Army works with the State, EPA officials, and the RAB to gather necessary data, complete the investigations, and determine alternatives for cleanup. A significant component of this cleanup plan is the public input as well as the additional community involvement activities that are recommended as a result of the community survey process.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Buildings, structures, landmarks, and other areas or features of historical significance or interest are protected from destruction under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. The Act provides for the designation, recognition, monitoring, and alteration of protected cultural keepsakes. Structures of interest on Fort McClellan include examples of time-period architecture, historically significant cemetery locations, identified archaeological sites, or militarily historical structures or areas. Under the NHPA, all military land holdings are subject to survey by a cultural resource professional to locate National Register resources. If historic resources must be destroyed, then scaled drawings, photographs, and other techniques must be used to compile a permanent record under the guidance of the historic American Buildings Survey/Historic America Engineering Record. All undertakings that may affect a registered property must be reported to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). The EBS provides details of the designated or recommended historical Post features.

3. COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Fort McClellan is located in Calhoun County, Alabama. According to 1999 data, the population of Calhoun County is 113,913. The City of Anniston (population 25,559) adjoins the main installation on the South and west. The town of Weaver (population 3,006) is less than one-mile northwest of the Main Post and the town of Oxford (population 10,662) is situated immediately south of Anniston. The City of Jacksonville (population 8,677) is approximately 4 miles north-northeast of the Main Post. The Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce (1999) provided population figures.

Fort McClellan historically contributed significantly to the population of Anniston and surrounding areas. The Army estimates that approximately 72,000 retired military personnel and their dependents live in

the region around FMC. Like any viable military installation, FMC provided family housing units, Bachelor Officer Quarters (BOQ), and Bachelor Enlisted Quarters (BEQ) to military personnel and their dependents. The median family income in Anniston County is \$31,800, compared to an Alabama median of \$32,300 and a U.S. median of \$39,900 (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 1996). Average wages in Anniston in 1993 were \$20,659, compared to \$22,149 in Alabama. The unemployment rate in Calhoun County (Nov 1999) was 4.9 percent compared to 4.4 percent in Alabama and 4.1 percent in the United States.

4. COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

During May – August, 1999, a survey was conducted to determine the local community perception of the cleanup activities at FMC. One hundred and fifty-seven survey forms were mailed and nineteen were returned. The purpose was to assist in identifying how the public receives their information pertaining to environmental issues at FMC and whether they felt it was sufficient or where improvement was needed. A sample of the survey and the summary of the results is presented at Appendix A.

Interviews were conducted with community members who live and work near Fort McClellan between March 18 and 29, 1996. Over 600 letters were mailed the week of February 29, 1996, to solicit interviewees who would provide information to support the development of the Community Relations Plan (CRP). Because response to the solicitation letter was limited, telephone calls were made to identify additional interviewees. The goal was to talk with at least 25 people representing a diverse range of community groups, locations, and interests. The final total of direct interviewees was 26. In addition, questionnaires obtained from 28 additional people who responded to a request from Fort McClellan for opinions about their environmental concerns and their interest in information about the environmental restoration on the Post also were reviewed. The range of interests and diverse backgrounds represented by the interviewees provided the information needed to produce a CRP that reflects the basic interests and needs of the community members. Citizens from the following community groups were interviewed:

- Media
- Educational community
- Military
- Retirees
- Business/Industry

- Civic groups
- Local government
- Neighborhoods
- Minority communities.

Prior to the interviews, questions were developed by the U.S. Army and SAIC to guide the Interview process and ensure that enough information would be generated to contribute to the CRP. All community interviewees were asked the same questions to provide a consistent base from which to compare divergent views. In most cases, as the interviews proceeded, other issues arose that allowed for further discussion of community concerns. In some cases, discussions flowed naturally and it was not necessary to adhere strictly to the scripted questions. The information generated from all interviews answered the intended questions. The questionnaire used in the interview process is presented in Appendix B.

The following summarizes the questions asked during the community interview. In most cases, respondent summaries reflect the majority of interviewee responses, unless the interviewee was specifically speaking about a group that they represented. There was a wide range of responses to each question. Because questions and responses often overlapped, comments have been organized within similar categories, rather than by the specific questions posed.

Although community opinions vary widely on some issues, there were several areas of nearly total agreement. Community members expressed distrust of the government and, therefore, are not ready to completely endorse Fort McClellan's approaches to cleaning up the Post in preparation for closure. Some interviewees were evidently struggling with their pro-military interests and want to give Fort McClellan the benefit of the doubt. Another overriding concern expressed by the interviewees is the need for information. Very few of those interviewed had access to current information about Post activities and want current, honest, open information exchanges on a regular basis. Interviewees do not know where to get information and expressed frustration over their inability to contact knowledgeable individuals on Post.

Some of the interviewees have an acute interest in the Post property and want to be involved in its future, while others have given up hope of having any say in the decision-making process. Still others are

not concerned with the disposition of the Post's properties. The community's disappointment over Fort McClellan's closure and resentment of the base closure process have fostered attitudes of disbelief and mistrust that will require a deliberate rebuilding effort through the Army's community outreach programs. Others in the community are ready to move forward, have accepted the base closure decision, and now want to work proactively to improve the future of the community by attracting new business and industry. However, they are also skeptical of the Army's intentions in terms of the future of the Post, and some expressed concern about having any of the Post property available to the community in the future.

The concern for the future can be overcome but it will require a dedicated effort by Fort McClellan personnel. Communication channels need to be established and used on a regular basis. The community needs to be informed of the closure and environmental programs as soon as draft reports are finalized. Outreach efforts need to be varied so that more people have an opportunity to learn about the programs, closure activities, and results.

4.1 PUBLIC INTEREST IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Some community members are well informed about the current state of the environment within Calhoun County (Question 9) and are actively engaged in seeking information and doing whatever they can to improve the area for their children and grandchildren. In most cases, interviewees were familiar with the environmental issues of concern in Calhoun County and surrounding areas. However, when asked to characterize the overall public opinion on this issue, many people stated that the "general public" in the area is apathetic and uninformed about the current state of the environment. There was a good level of knowledge about environmental issues facing the area among the long-term residents and retirees who were interviewed. Some interviewees had the opinion that many younger people are not at all focused on environmental issues because of other priorities in their daily lives, such as pursuing their careers and attending to economic needs.

Community interviewees listed many concerns regarding environmental issues of Calhoun County. A major concern indicated by interviewees involved the stockpile of chemical weapons at Anniston Army Depot. Many in the community are afraid of the materials stored at the Depot and the possibility of what

could happen in a crisis situation. In addition, people expressed concern that once the incinerator (used to dispose of the chemical weapon stockpile) is operating, the Army will bring in additional chemical weapons from other areas, thereby creating the potential for transportation-related accidents. The overall perception is that the Army has the ability to do whatever it wants at the Depot and the public will have to face the consequences. Some interviewees expressed concern about living in the community for decades and not knowing what was stored at the Depot. Once they were informed about the Depot (leaking underground storage tanks [USTs], etc.), they felt that they had been deceived for years. Many of the interviewees believe that environmental issues at Fort McClellan are perceived by the general public in the same way. An underlying issue expressed by the interviewees was, "If chemical weapons could be stored at the Depot for all these years with all the accompanying problems, then what is really happening at Fort McClellan and what will be disclosed to the community when base closure begins?"

Other community concerns include potential groundwater contamination from both the Army and industry discharges, the polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) contamination that has been discovered near the Solutia (formerly Monsanto) plant in Anniston, contamination from other industrial companies near town, illegal dumping, questionable practices at landfills, fish kills in Choccolocco Creek, flooding issues, and air emissions from industry. All of these concerns, however, are secondary to the fear and concerns voiced about the Anniston Army Depot.

4.2 KEY ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS INVOLVING THE POST

Most interviewees were not aware of any environmental contamination on Fort McClellan's property (Questions 3,4, and 5) until recent (within the last 6 months) news stories revealed the sites that are under review. Although they were familiar with Post activities and understood the military practices involved chemical agents, the interviewees did not consider the possibility of contamination. Overall, most interviewees were troubled about soil, water, and air pollution. Other concerns cited by interviewees included hazardous materials and ordnance contamination.

Several interviewees were extremely concerned about radioactive waste at the Post and about

possible contamination as a result of radioactive laboratory operations. One interviewee cited concerns from a number of her acquaintances concerning thyroid problems and elevated cancer rates that they believed could be a result of radioactive material exposure.

Another interviewee had concerns about Post property and the possibility that the general public could be exposed to leftover mustard gas. She cited an incident that allegedly occurred in the fall of 1994. It is believed that a student from Jacksonville State University was hiking on Fort McClellan property and stepped in a substance that burned his legs. The student thought the substance was mustard gas. The interviewee reaffirmed that the student was treated at the hospital but that there was no media regarding the incident. The interviewee feels certain that there was a cover-up and is concerned about the safety of the public when using the Fort property for recreational use.

A number of the interviewees voiced their concern of potential groundwater contamination. All of the people interviewed from Weaver knew that the water supply in private wells near the Post were sampled in the fall of 1995 and that there was a potential problem with the water. A local official also expressed concern about the water situation, especially since the water from the City of Weaver is a source of revenue. The official expressed confidence in the level of information he was getting from the Post and said that he knew who to contact for information. He also explained that he had to seek out information initially (last fall) and thought that the communication link was not very strong at that time. Another interviewee talked about her reaction when she observed water sampling near Post property. She called the Public Affairs Office (PAO) at Fort McClellan to obtain information and received an unsatisfactory answer, rather than an explanation of why the sampling was occurring.

Several interviewees with direct connections to the Post, either through past or present military service or employment, expressed concern about the unexploded ordnance (UXO) that is present on Post properties. One civilian employee told us about a child who uncovered mortar shells while playing near a construction site. A number of people said that they thought some of the artillery ranges could never be cleaned up adequately enough to be safe for people to have free access to them.

Some people were familiar with the on-Post graves of the prisoners of war who died in captivity. They were concerned that some of the prisoners were used as "guinea pigs" and, therefore, died as a result of chemical poisoning, which could ultimately lead to contamination of the soil surrounding the gravesites. One interviewee said she would like to know why a number of the prisoners of war died within a few days of one another (according to the dates on the headstones).

Several nearby residents mentioned their concern about archaeological sites and cultural resources that they hoped would be maintained in good condition. One interviewee also asked what would happen to the murals in the Officers Club. A number of interviewees were concerned about migration of contaminants from landfills and were aware that at least one landfill on Post was contaminating the soil and possibly the groundwater.

4.3 COMMUNITY/FORT McCLELLAN RELATIONSHIP

Understanding current public perception regarding the Post and its activities is important to producing a CRP that reflects the interests of the community and is of value to both community members and the Post staff. Information pertaining to the level of trust and credibility inherent in the relationship between the installation and the community help in designing outreach materials that speak directly to the community's level of concern.

4.3.1 Knowledge of Post Activities

Most people interviewed were familiar, in a general sense, with the mission and the ongoing training activities being conducted at Fort McClellan (Questions 1 and 2). The connections between the community and Fort McClellan are extensive and pervasive. Many lives have been intertwined with the Fort over the years, either through family members, friends, or neighbors serving or working at the Post or through various other activities. Almost everyone interviewed had visited the Post, had attended a function there, or in some way had a connection to people on Post. One unconfirmed statistic, obtained from an interviewee, was that between 60 to 70 percent of the people in the community have connections with the Post. As the Post prepared for closure, the community's sense of impending loss was great. They felt

resentful of the base realignment and closure (BRAC) Commission and betrayed by the Army for giving up the fight to keep the Post open. A majority of the interviewees expressed concerns about the economic impacts of the Post's closure. They were concerned about property values, jobs, and the future of the community. Many military retirees based their choice of retirement location on the availability of the Post facilities, medical care, and other Army resources. They expressed disbelief that the Post is actually closing and can't predict what Calhoun County will be like without Fort McClellan.

Another major concern is the impact that the Post's closure will have on the safety of the local residents in the event of an emergency at the Anniston Army Depot. Some people said their comfort level with the chemical munitions being stored at the Anniston Army Depot will drop dramatically when Fort McClellan closes since so much expertise existed at the Fort to handle these hazardous materials.

4.3.2 Public Perception

The interviewees were unanimously positive in their overall perception of the Post. Most people's lives have been touched in some way by the Post, and many of the interviewees spoke of their past experiences and connections with the Post (Question 7). It is general knowledge that Fort McClellan has been a significant factor in the economic viability of the City of Anniston and Calhoun County and that the influx of military service people and their families have helped define the community. On the other hand, many interviewees said that they were well aware of the "dirty" environment that exists on Post and were afraid that the Army would just lock the gates and leave when the time came for closure. The overall sense of distrust and disenchantment with the Federal Government and the BRAC Commission has left many with the impression that the Fort/Army/Government will do whatever they want to do. They are concerned that the Post will be locked up and the Army will walk away, transferring some of Pelham Range to the National Guard to conduct training activities, but leaving the community with nothing but economic instability.

The community wants to see the Post cleaned up and transferred as soon as possible. Several people commented that they were tired of hearing about environmental studies that have been ongoing for years. They want to see plans for cleanup, progress, and results and they want to see them soon. Another overriding issue was the lack of communication between the Post and the community. People were very

disappointed to learn that the Post had not been more proactive about regularly communicating the status of environmental studies and findings.

4.3.3 Community Involvement

About half of the interviewees were positive in their assessment of the role the Fort has taken in the community (Question 8). Many others, however, felt that community involvement by Post personnel was due to individual interests and that, in general, the Post could have and should have been doing much more in the community. Most interviewees acknowledged that Fort McClellan has had a positive effect on programs like "Adopt-A-School," where it has taken a proactive role, but many thought the Post should have extended their educational support beyond one or two schools.

Another positive response was in relation to crisis situations. Several interviewees talked about the debilitating snowstorm in the early 90's during which Fort McClellan personnel provided emergency support for the community with 4-wheel drive vehicles and medical assistance. The security in knowing that the military was in the community in the event of some other emergency, like a chemical spill at the Anniston Army Depot, also was mentioned.

It was suggested several times that the community could have been enhanced much more if the Post had made community outreach more of a priority. Several people commented that the Post's public relations ("PR") was good and it was getting better since the announcement of the closure. They didn't equate this with community involvement. Several people commented that Fort McClellan is basically a good neighbor, but that it is not aware of what the community issues and problems are and, therefore, is not responsive to community needs.

4.4 COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Appropriate channels that allow for the exchange of information and are necessary for the establishment of effective two-way communication. The following sections summarize the interviewee's

opinions regarding the communication channels between Fort McClellan and the public.

4.4.1 Points of Contact

One of the biggest complaints that interviewees voiced was that they are not informed of Fort McClellan activities and do not have a way to obtain information regarding the issues that concern them (Question 6). Interviewees are interested in having access to current, unfiltered information, but do not know where to obtain this type of information. Most people resort to word of mouth, rumor, and news stories for their information, but understand that all of these sources can be less than factual. Interviewees stated that they want to have a way to access current and accurate information. Some people expressed that they have recently found ways to reach reliable points of contact at the Post, either through the I.R.A, the Environmental Management Office, or the PAO. There is hope that the RAB meetings will be another communication channel available to the people in the community.

There were only a few people who actually had the name and telephone number of the appropriate person to call on Post for information about the environmental restoration program. It is vitally important that Fort McClellan establish points of contact for the community and to circulate them in a variety of ways so that interested community members can have a ready source of information.

4.4.2 Media

Other than word of mouth, the most often cited source of information (Question 10) for the general public is the news media, usually the *Anniston Star* or the local TV channel. Nearly every interviewee expressed concern about the validity of the information as reported in the *Star*, although they explained they do not have much of a choice for information sources. Most people were quick to defend the local media by explaining that they do not have the resources to cover environmental issues in depth, but many were also critical of the local media and its coverage of issues. Some people said they depended on the Birmingham media for their news, although Birmingham doesn't do much to cover the Anniston area. Others tune in to local talk radio shows and rely on them for coverage of significant issues.

Again, people want information sources they can trust and would like the media to do a better job of giving them information without slanting the information or editorializing. Many thought that the media has the capability to reach a majority of the interested public, but that Fort McClellan has a responsibility to initiate a more proactive arrangement through all media outlets so that current information is readily communicated.

5. COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES AND TIMING

Fort McClellan is committed to conducting a proactive community relations program that will give the interested public ample opportunity to be involved in the cleanup process up to the closure of September 30, 1999 and during the transition. The following suggested community relations activities are the culmination of interview summaries and public involvement techniques that have been successful for closures in other communities. The implementation of selected community relations activities will undoubtedly be based on additional site-specific input from the community.

5.1 RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

Based on the community interviews and personal opinions gathered (Questions 12 and 13), there are a number of community relations activities that are recommended. The biggest challenge will be to develop effective two-way communication channels between the community and the Post and increase the level of trust, credibility, and mutual respect that FMC and the community have enjoyed in the past. The selection of a 20-person RAB in the area, along with the LRA, gives the Post two venues through which accurate and timely information can be disseminated. While the LRA had a rocky start, it is now in place and has been meeting and working diligently to identify community issues and priorities for land reuse and redevelopment. The RAB held its first meeting in May 1996 and meets monthly to review progress on environmental restoration and consult with the Army in making decisions that meet the needs of all the stakeholders, including the community, regulators, State, and Army. Each of these groups has a diverse membership that will facilitate the transfer of information to other community stakeholders.

One of the issues that arose during the interviews was the opinion that most of the Post's efforts at

creating dialogue opportunities with the community included only those people who were connected through business or leadership positions with FMC or city/county structure. There is an impression that the lower to middle income and minority communities are not included in the Post's network of audiences targeted for information exchange. This perception is an important one to dispel since the future of Calhoun County and the reuse and redevelopment of the Post depends on the important contributions and opinions of all members of the community. Therefore, it is imperative that FMC specifically plan activities that include community members at all levels in planned programs for public participation.

5.1.1 Mailing List

A mailing list that identifies persons interested in the FMC environmental cleanup activities will be maintained by the Fort McClellan Environmental Office. The list should include members of the RAB, BCT, local officials, and other interested parties. Since names may be added to the list throughout the cleanup process, interested individuals should so state in writing and submit their name, title, address, and phone number to the Fort McClellan Point of Contact listed in Appendix C. Individuals on the mailing list will receive general information such as Newsletters and Fact Sheets outlining the status of the cleanup process as well as notices of any community meeting or workshops.

5.1.2 Public Meetings

The interviewees were split in their reaction to the effectiveness of public meetings. Many people wanted to see more meetings, on a variety of days and at various times of the day, and held in different neighborhoods and public buildings to give more people in the community a chance to participate in discussions on the environmental restoration at the Post. Others thought public meetings were a waste of time and a drain on otherwise busy lives. There was a unanimous opinion that when public meetings are held, it is important to keep them informal and to create lots of opportunities for discussion. Many people are intimidated by the typical large public meeting where a presentation by an Army representative is followed by a question and answer period, and where only the truly brave venture forth to a microphone.

The Fort McClellan RAB has scheduled quarterly meetings in the local area in order to make it easier for the public to come and learn about the progress towards cleanup. The meetings are informal and

provide time on the agenda for audience comment and discussion. They have been held in local communities, churches, meeting centers and at the local shopping mall. These should continue. Other facilities across the country have had success in creating "information fairs" where tabletop exhibits or poster sessions are set up around a room and technical staff is on hand to explain programs to the public. These could be good opportunities for members of the RAB and LRA to be on hand, along with the public and the media, to assist in opening up topics of discussion that focus on shared goals. Even if the attendance is small, these briefings will enable media representatives to get the latest information, interested publics to find ways to become involved in the program, and RAB and LRA members to communicate directly with their constituents.

5.1.3 Community Presentations

Some interviewees spoke of the good experiences they had when a speaker from the Post came to their group to talk about Fort McClellan. The organization and promotion of a Speakers Bureau is a good option for creating better communication channels with the community. Meetings of the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA), Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, church groups, neighborhood associations, professional organizations, and civic clubs are wonderful venues for establishing direct relationships with those who have an interest in Post activities.

5.1.4 Information Repositories

Fort McClellan has established information repositories for the local community. They are located at the Anniston Calhoun Public Library in Anniston and at the Houston Cole Library at Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville. The addresses, phone numbers, and hours of operations for the information repositories are presented in Appendix F. The Administrative Record is located at Building 215 on Fort McClellan. Because many people in the community were unaware of the availability of documents, Fort McClellan will promote them in a more proactive manner through public service announcements, flyers at the library, and during community meetings. In each of the libraries, the information repositories are maintained in separate stacks in a prominent, readily accessible location. Fort McClellan ensures the

documents are current and effective maintenance is ongoing. Examples of items contained in information repositories include:

- Final Site Investigations
- Final Reports
- Fort McClellan EBS
- RAB Meeting Minutes and Transcripts
- BCT Meeting Minutes
- Reference and Miscellaneous Cleanup Information

5.1.5 Written Information Materials

There also were mixed reactions to the suggestion that Fort McClellan prepare additional written information materials for the community. Some people felt that newsletters, fact sheets, and flyers could help increase the level of awareness in the community and provide factual information on the progress of the program. Others felt that written information materials would be seen as nothing more than "junk mail" and would be a wasted effort, especially in these times when most people watch television more than they read. One interviewee suggested a questionnaire that could be distributed in the newspaper so that interested community members could provide direct feedback on their concerns and interests in future communications. Most interviewees agreed that some information materials were necessary, even as an accompaniment to other activities, as briefings, speeches, RAB meetings, and the information repositories. Written materials could also provide background for the educational community to include discussions of Fort McClellan in their science or government classes (environmental or societal issues).

5.1.6 Direct Mailings

Some people were interested in receiving direct mail at their home or business address concerning Fort McClellan's environmental program. Others felt that direct mail is a waste of time and money. An inexpensive one-page flyer could be created to disseminate information on a regular basis. Fort McClellan has developed both a newsletter and fact sheets, which are distributed on a quarterly basis to interested

community members on the mailing list. These documents report on the progress of the environmental clean up and reuse process, LRA, and the RAB. In order to further enhance communication, Fort McClellan may consider using a local high school or college journalism class interested in taking on a newsletter project, which could give them real-world experience, serve the community, and help create additional communication channels to the public.

5.1.7 Visual Materials

Posters, displays, videos, and other visual materials can be helpful in communicating effectively to a wide variety of audiences. Whether they support presentations or public meetings or serve as stand-alone materials in libraries, at schools, or other public places, the creation of some visual materials would enhance the community relations program and help people understand the technical aspects of environmental remediation.

5.1.8 Post Tours

Fort McClellan frequently offered its facilities for tours of local groups, including the leadership training group sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. After closure, there is little opportunity for extended tours, however, the RAB may want to visit some of the environmental cleanup sites. This is an excellent opportunity to view first hand the cleanup and investigative process. Perhaps the LRA and the RAB may want to co-host an event where interested community representatives can have a chance to visit the Fort and see for themselves what will be available to the community in the future. Tours are extremely effective in showing the community the Army's commitment to transfer as much property as possible for reuse and redevelopment.

5.1.9 Telephone Information Hotline

Fort McClellan could establish and promote a hotline number for information about environmental restoration and cleanup, since one of the over-riding issues was uncertainty about information sources. The number could be answered by FMC personnel during working hours and an answering machine could be

activated during off-duty hours to take messages, questions, and issues of concern. This number could then be promoted through the media and public service announcements (PSA). If developed and maintained, it will be essential to set a time limit for responding to requests (i.e., 24 to 48 hours) so that the public is assured that the hotline's purpose is to provide answers in a timely manner.

5.1.10 Media

The majority of the community learns about happenings in and around Calhoun County through local media outlets. Since media representatives typically have to cover so many topics and issues on a daily basis, it is often difficult for them to delve into a particular topic in much detail. Fort McClellan is taking the initiative to establish ongoing and positive relationships with the reporters at the local television station, radio stations, and newspapers. Interactions in the forms of briefings, tours, meetings, editorial boards, and news releases occur when FMC environmental activities are being conducted so that the local media is well informed about the environmental program, knows where to go for background information, and understands the regulatory framework that drives both the BRAC process and the remediation. Fort McClellan will increase this interaction as the BRAC environmental clean up and reuse program progresses. The Birmingham media is also contacted since many local residents depend on them for their news. Fort McClellan may pursue using the local radio talk programs as another forum to create open channels of communication and give another segment of the community a chance to ask questions and get direct answers. A representative of a local radio station offered to sponsor a live talk show to give Fort staff members an opportunity to interact with the community.

5.1.11 Administrative Record

The Administrative Record is a file that contains all information used by the lead agency to make its site-management decisions on the selection of a response action under CERCLA. This file is located at Building 215, in the Environmental Office at Fort McClellan.

5.1.12 Environmental Justice

Environmental justice is a fair treatment and meaningful involvement in the development and implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies by all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income. Fair treatment means no groups of people should bear a greater share of the negative environmental effects stemming from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of Federal, State, local and tribal programs and policies.

Fort McClellan is keenly aware of the importance of environmental justice issues and seeks to ensure that IRP actions do not disproportionately impact any segment of the population. The Army will continue to work closely with the Fort McClellan community (through the RAB public forum) along with the State, Federal, and local regulators, to foster interactive dialogue that considers the needs, interests and concerns of those most directly impacted by the cleanup actions.

5.2 SCHEDULE FOR COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAM

Meaningful public involvement is important in cleanup and reuse. It is important to continue to enhance the community relations program with regularly scheduled events. Once established, events and programs should be consistent. The public absorbs information more readily if it is presented in a regularly scheduled manner. The monthly RAB is an important venue to keep the public informed of ongoing cleanup activities. However, the RAB membership must acknowledge their part in the process and communicate the information presented at the monthly meetings to their community, civic groups and area organizations.

5.2.1 Ongoing Activities

Once established, a number of the suggested community relations activities will be ongoing. This would include a hotline number, media relations, tours, and the development and maintenance of written and visual materials. Other activities will be less frequent, but should be scheduled on a regular basis.

5.2.2 Monthly/Bi-monthly Activities

Regularly scheduled meetings of the RAB and LRA should be announced through the media and flyers at libraries and other public places to keep the community informed and allow the citizens access to the proceedings if they are interested. Open meetings for the RAB currently are held every third Monday of the month at the Environmental Office Conference Room in Building 215 at Fort McClellan. The RAB should continue to hold quarterly meetings at various locations within the surrounding community. Both the media and the public should continue to be encouraged to attend. As major milestones are met in the environmental restoration process, news releases should be distributed to keep the public informed.

As civic clubs, professional associations, and other groups prepare their annual program schedules, FMC should fit prominently into their choices for public presentations. The availability of speakers could be announced by sending mail flyers to groups on the mailing list, or through public service announcements. Information repositories should be checked regularly to ensure the available information is current and accessible.

5.2.3 Quarterly Activities

Depending on which communication programs Fort McClellan decides to pursue, it will be necessary to establish regular briefings with the community/media to announce progress and status of environmental activities. The Post should arrange news briefings or community briefings and updates of written and visual materials quarterly. This will give the community the opportunity to learn about program status and how to be involved in the process of decision-making. As the newsletter and fact sheets are created, they should be disseminated at least quarterly to keep people informed and give them opportunities to respond with questions or comments.

6. SUMMARY

The continuing changes in United States defense philosophies, priorities, and programs in the last 50 years reflect the changing relationships, conditions, and threats in the world. The need to streamline defense activities is typically supported across the United States. But base closure decisions are never easy and never without community impact. Some communities faced with base closure have suffered economically, while others have moved forward to create new futures for their communities.

Through effective community outreach and public involvement programs, Fort McClellan and the interested public can continue to work together to develop an ongoing dialogue that seeks to achieve their mutual goals--cleanup of the contaminated sites and ranges and transfer of property and facilities to the community for reuse and redevelopment. The key to success in these endeavors will be the trust and credibility that is essential to the shared decision-making process.

This CRP is a step towards better public involvement by outlining a strategy to create opportunities for the public to become informed and to provide input into the cleanup process. While the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) and Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA) can serve as first lines of communication between the community and the Post, even more communication channels are necessary to give the interested community a meaningful way to be informed and involved in the program.

As Fort McClellan encounters closure and transition, FMC personnel and Calhoun County residents will have unique opportunities presented to them and many challenges to overcome. The establishment and maintenance of a community partnership will provide a mechanism so that mutually beneficial decisions can be made throughout the process. The community wants to see Fort McClellan cleaned up and transferred as soon as possible so they can proceed to plan the future of the Anniston area and Calhoun County.

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