

FORT RITCHIE
Cascade, Maryland
(Base Realignment and Closure Site)

Site Location

Fort Ritchie is located in north central Maryland, in the northeastern corner of Washington County off of State Route 550 near the Pennsylvania State line. The site is situated approximately 20 miles north of Frederick and 15 miles northeast of Hagerstown. Fort Ritchie is 638 acres in size and employed approximately 1,000 military and 1,000 civilian personnel before it closed in 1998. The post contains numerous buildings including residences, meeting areas, and work centers.

Fort Ritchie lies at the foot of Quirauk Mountain in the Catoclin Range of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The site is underlain by the Catoclin metabasalt of the Cambrian Period. While groundwater may be encountered at shallow depths below the ground surface, potable water supplied to the post is from a combination of six deep groundwater wells and one spring. Water from these sources is stored in two reservoirs, one 300,000-gallon and one 1,000,000-gallon reservoir. The 1,000,000-gallon reservoir is only used for fire protection and emergencies.

Site History

The Buena Vista Ice Company first developed the Fort Ritchie property before 1900. Two lakes were constructed to provide ice to the Baltimore and Washington areas by train. In 1926, the land was purchased by the State of Maryland to develop a brigade training area for the Maryland National Guard. The training area was named Camp Ritchie, after Governor Albert C. Ritchie.

During the next few years, ownership of Camp Ritchie alternated between the State and federal government. In June 1942, the federal government ordered Camp Ritchie activated as a War Department Military Intelligence Training Center. According to the *Real Property Master Plan*, 20,000 intelligence troops were housed and trained at Camp Ritchie over a four-year period. An "impact area" located on a hillside west of the current residential area was reportedly used as a mortar range during WWII. In 1948, the Army acquired the post to support the Alternate Joint Communications Center, which began operations in 1954.

From 1964 to 1975, the post was used as a support installation and eventually headquarters for the 7th Signal Command. In 1995, Fort Ritchie was placed on the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) list. That same year, construction of a Maryland National Guard Armory was completed at the former skeet range. All military activity at Fort Ritchie ceased by 1998. Two communication facilities supported by Fort Ritchie (located west and north of the post) are not undergoing closure.

Environmental Investigations

Following its designation for closure under BRAC 95, the Army, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) began meeting to identify and address environmental issues at the facility. In addition, the Army established a Restoration Advisory Board in February 1996, which meets quarterly to discuss facility-related environmental issues with the community.

Fort Ritchie is not listed on the EPA's inventory of potential hazardous waste sites (CERCLIS). From 1991 through 1997, MDE's Oil Control Program conducted over 300 removal and replacement actions on underground storage tank systems across the base. In addition, the

facility has removed soil at the former skeet shooting range, and the former incinerator areas, and 12 truckloads of solid waste debris that had been illegally dumped within the base.

The *Installation Environmental Assessment of the Fort Ritchie Real Property Master Plan* (EA) was prepared for the Army Corps of Engineers in 1993. The EA documented Fort Ritchie's existing environmental condition (as of 1993), which included an "impact area" that was used as a mortar range during WWII. The *Ordnance, Ammunition, and Explosives, Chemical Warfare Materials Archives Search Report for Fort Ritchie* identified areas in and near the "impact area" that could potentially contain unexploded ordnance (UXO). An assessment of the extent of UXO at the facility was conducted in 1997-1998. In September of 1999, an *Ordnance and Explosives Site Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) Final* was prepared that proposed four-foot clearance in residential and commercial areas and a one foot clearance for less accessible areas. The UXO removal action, Operable Unit 13, began in 2001. As of December 2002, the Army reported in a public meeting that the originally planned removal work had been completed. A small area, less than 30 acres, will be cleared once some current residents have been relocated.

The *Environmental Baseline Survey* was submitted in 1996. A total of 16 Operable Units (OU) were designated on the facility for further assessment. The following is a list of each OU and the identified remedial alternative:

- OU 1, Golf Course Maintenance Shop, No Risk due to Army activities (No Action)
- OU 2, Incinerator, Removal Action Completed (No Further Action)
- OU 3, Lakes, No Action after further Site Investigation Level study
- OU 4, Motor Pool, Remedial Action being evaluated
- OU 5, Department of Public Works Maintenance Area, Removal Action Completed (No Further Action with Institutional Controls)
- OU 6, Auto Craft Shop, No Action after further SI Level study
- OU 7, Abandoned Small Arms Ranges, No Action after SI Level study
- OU 8, Post Exchange Service Station, Oil Control Close-out Completed
- OU 9, Administration Area, Removal Action Completed (No Further Action with Institutional Controls)
- OU 10, Wise Road Disposal Area, Army retaining property to support Maryland National Guard
- OU 11, Wetlands Area, No Action after SI Level study
- OU 12, Hospital Area, No Action after SI Level study
- OU 13, Unexploded Ordnance Area, Removal Action in progress
- OU 14, Former Burn Area, Removal Action Completed to address petroleum contamination
- OU 15, Reservoir Road Disposal Area, No Action after SI Level study
- OU 16, Electrical Substation, No Action after SI Level study

Current Status

The Army is working with the PenMar Development Corporation, the local reuse authority, to return the property to civilian use. However, this relationship has been complicated by a recent court ruling, which required that the Army and PenMar back-up in the BRAC process and re-advertise the availability of the property for potential non-cost transfers. PenMar's redevelopment plan had envisioned a multi-use training facility, corporate conference center and limited residential facilities for Ft. Ritchie. The Army continues to plan for property transfer but the timing of this action is currently uncertain. The original plan was to transfer the property in three phases. The first phase would transfer approximately 230 acres of the former cantonment portion of the facility. Subsequent property transfers would follow. The first phase of the unexploded ordnance removal action was completed in the Spring of 2003.

The groundwater contamination associated with OU 4, the Former Motor Pool facility continues to be assessed. During 2002 and 2003, the Army performed a source removal action at OU 4.

Within the boundaries of the identified contamination source, sodium permanganate was introduced into the groundwater to chemically oxidize the chlorinated solvent hot spot. However, the final follow-up sampling failed to document that the removal action's objective was fully achieved.

Future Activity

The Army plans to complete the second portion of the UXO removal action during 2004.

Facility Contacts

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Site Repositories

Blue Ridge Summit Library
13676 Monterey Lane
Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214

Washington County Free Library
100 South Potomac Street
Hagerstown, MD 21740