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UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

STATEMENT OF

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ON DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROGRAM

BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

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Introduction

Chair McCollum, Ranking Member Calvert, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department of the Navy (DON) Environmental Restoration Program (ERP). I appreciate the hard work of the Members and Staff of this Committee to ensure funding stability and principled oversight of DON's ERP to protect human health and the environment for the Sailors, Marines, civilian employees, their families and the communities who work and live on and around our installations across the Nation.

Summary

The DON ERP is a well-established, mature program. We have been diligently conducting site investigations and cleanup actions on our installations for over 35 years. We work every day to be good stewards of the environment, and are proud of the substantial progress and many successes we have made at the Department's 4,452 ERP sites to protect human health and the environment. The DON's environmental stewardship protects and preserves the mission capabilities of our installations and training areas, ensures operational flexibility, meets environmental laws and regulations, and sustains the resources and public support we need to carry out our mission. Our progress and successes are also due in great part to our strong partnerships with our State and Federal regulatory agency partners, and our open and transparent engagements and communications with community members around our installations.

The DON funds and implements the ERP under the Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP) in accordance with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) cleanup framework. The DON's ERP sites comprise 4,030 Installation Restoration Program (IRP) sites conducting investigations and cleanup of chemicals released to

the environment, and 422 Munitions Response Program (MRP) sites addressing former military sites known or suspected to contain unexploded ordnance, discarded military munitions or munitions constituents.

Prioritization

The DON prioritizes ERP sites by risk to human health and the environment. Upon identification of an IRP or MRP site, the DON swiftly initiates the first steps in the CERCLA process, the Preliminary Assessment (PA) and Site Inspection (SI), to gather sufficient data to determine whether there has been a release of a CERCLA hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant that requires further action. We use the information from the PA/SI to assess the relative risk of each IRP and MRP site in accordance with the Department of Defense (DoD) Relative Risk Site Evaluation (RRSE) framework or Munitions Response Site Prioritization Protocol (MRSPP), respectively. The DON conducts these relative risk evaluations in consultation with our regulatory agency partners and community stakeholders to provide a consistent approach to prioritize our response actions. The Department uses this information to sequence funding and projects for assessment and mitigation of the highest risk sites first. As an illustrative example of the risk-based approach, a site with a known release of a chemical to groundwater that is flowing off an installation and impacting or threatening to impact drinking water supplies above health-based regulatory standards would be a higher priority than a small fuel spill in the middle of a large installation that has impacted only a small amount of soil and is immobile.

Funding

DON environmental restoration project managers regularly evaluate the progress of each site to determine the funding requirements for the coming years. Site progress may speed up or slow

down based on numerous factors, including the levels and extent of chemicals found in various environmental media (e.g., soil and groundwater), regulatory review times and capacity, and community stakeholder views. We aggregate the site-level funding requirements and sequencing of projects to develop each year's funding request for the Environmental Restoration, Navy (ER,N) account as part of the President's Budget. As stated above, the DON ERP is a mature program, with a well-established record of protecting human health and the environment through short- and long-term response actions taken over the past three decades. The majority of our remaining work is to complete long-term remedies that are in progress, many of which will span several more decades to achieve final cleanup goals.

Status

The DON ERP has made great progress over the years implementing cleanup solutions to protect human health and the environment. We have achieved the CERCLA response complete milestone for 3,689 of our 4,452 sites, or 83 percent of our sites. Of those 3,689 sites at response complete, 3,067 sites have been cleaned up to levels that allow unrestricted use, with the other 622 sites needing minimal land use controls and monitoring to ensure the cleanup remedies remain protective. Another 245 sites have remedial technologies installed and are operating as designed to achieve final cleanup goals in the coming years, a milestone called remedy-in-place. The remaining 518 sites are our most challenging sites, requiring additional time to achieve final remedies, or addressing new and emerging chemicals of concern.

Emerging Issues

There are many chemicals of emerging concern across the nation, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) being at the forefront. The DON is implementing a comprehensive strategy to manage and address the known or potential releases of PFAS from DON activities on Navy

and Marine Corps installations and facilities nationwide. We took early actions to ensure that Navy and Marine Corps installations and facilities have drinking water without perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) health advisory levels. The DON also proactively identified locations where PFAS may have migrated to off-installation drinking water sources. After identifying these locations, DON officials gathered water samples from public and private drinking water wells to test for PFAS. Where EPA lifetime health advisory levels were exceeded, DON provided a short-term solution of alternate water for drinking and cooking purposes, and is proceeding with developing and implementing long-term solutions. The DON continues identifying, evaluating and addressing PFAS releases resulting from our activities, and is committed to taking proactive action to identify and mitigate the impacts of PFAS releases to human health and the environment within the CERCLA framework.

Conclusion

The Sailors, Marines, civilian employees, their families and the communities who work and live on and around our installations deserve to do so in a healthy environment. The DON is committed to being a good steward of the environment while advancing our mission to defend and protect this great Nation. The progress and successes achieved by our DON environmental restoration team, regulatory agency partners and community stakeholders are shining examples of the DON's commitment to environmental stewardship in action. I thank the leadership and membership of this Committee for your attention, interest and ongoing support to the DON ERP. It is an honor to work with each of you, and I look forward to your questions.