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UNTIL RELEASED BY THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

STATEMENT OF

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(ENVIRONMENT AND MISSION READINESS)

ON THE 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, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, 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 Subcommittee to ensure funding stability and principled oversight of the 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 4,439 ERP sites to protect human health and the environment. The DON's environmental stewardship, including the restoration program, 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 process. The DON's ERP sites comprise 4,019 Installation

Restoration Program (IRP) sites conducting investigations and cleanup of chemicals released to the environment, and 420 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 (MRSP), 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 3,683 of our 4,439 sites, or 83 percent of our sites. Of those 3,683 sites at response complete, 3,075 sites have been cleaned up to levels that allow unrestricted use, with the other 608 sites needing minimal land use controls and monitoring to ensure the cleanup remedies remain protective. Another 231 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 525 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, with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) 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 identify and address drinking water with perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), two compounds in the class of PFAS chemicals, above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) health advisory levels. The DON 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, the DON provided a short-term solution of alternate water for drinking and cooking purposes, and proceeded to develop and implement long-term drinking water 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.

### **Munitions Response Program**

The DON continues to make progress at MRP sites. In January 2022, we joined the government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in a ceremony to re-open Chiget Beach on the island of Tinian for public access. Chiget Beach was used for military training as part of the Tinian Mortar Range. After several years of intensive site investigation and munitions removal, the DON completed its response and opened the beach for safe public recreational use. At Vieques, Puerto Rico, the DON has completed surface clearance of munitions on 4,340 acres,

and subsurface clearance of 12 miles of roads and 11 miles of beaches. We have consistently worked with the local community, elected officials, the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, EPA, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify priority areas and employ innovative technologies for accelerated cleanup. In Illinois on the shores of Lake Michigan, DON environmental experts are working with the City of Highland Park, Lake County and the Openlands organization to clear munitions and restore public access to Openlands Lakeshore Preserve, located on the former Fort Sheridan military base. We remain committed to fast-tracking access and other planned land uses at our MRP sites, while maintaining the highest standard of health and safety for our workforce and the public.

### **Community Involvement**

Public participation and community involvement is an important component of the DON ERP. We prepare and maintain Community Involvement Plans at our installations, based on information we gather from residents, local officials, public interest groups, and other interested or affected parties to understand community concerns and information needs, and foster meaningful community involvement throughout the environmental restoration process. We recognize community involvement as an effective method to advance environmental justice and understand the socioeconomic impacts around our installations. Restoration Advisory Boards (RABs) are the cornerstone of DON efforts to expand community involvement in decisions about cleanup at our installations. A RAB provides a forum for local communities, installations, and regulatory agencies to work together in an atmosphere that encourages discussion and exchange of information. RABs bring together people who reflect the diverse interests of the community, help identify issues of concern, and improve overall communication. Recent

examples of DON support of RABs include 2022 membership drives that revitalized RAB participation in Calverton, New York and Vieques, Puerto Rico.

### **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 exercising good stewardship 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 in fulfilling our cleanup responsibilities are shining examples of the DON's commitment to environmental stewardship in action. I thank the leadership and membership of this Subcommittee 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.