

RESTORATION INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES (FUDS)
PROJECT FACT SHEET
May 1997

HNC REVISION: 23 FEBRUARY 1998
TAG REVIEW DATE: 19 MAY 1998

1. **SITE NAME:** Benson/Ocotillo Dry Lake

SITE NUMBER: J09CA701100

LOCATION:

City: Ocotillo Wells
County: San Diego County
State: California

PROJECT NUMBER: J09CA701106

CATEGORY: OE

INPR RAC: 2

ASR RAC: 3

TAG RAC: 3

2. **POC'S:**

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3. **SITE DESCRIPTION:** The former Benson/Ocotillo Dry Lake consists of 353.11 acres located just outside the southern boundary of the Army's former Borrego Manuever Area and outside the boundary of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park north of the intersection of Highway 78 and Split Mountain Road

and just north of the town of Ocotillo Wells in San Diego County, California. The latitude and longitude are 33 09'06"N and 116 08'10"W, respectively in Sections 3, 4, 9, and 10, Township 12 South and Range 8 East. The tract is irregular in shape. Currently the site is used as a municipal airport and is owned by the County of San Diego. There are no facilities, only two dirt landing strips.

The climate in the area is desert with hot summers and mild winters. In the summer months the daily average is 88.93 F and in the winter months the average is 57.3 F. The average annual rainfall is 6.83 inches. The topography is generally flat with low hills surrounding the dry lake. The site lies within the Lower Borrego Valley just east of Borrego Mountain. The elevation is 150 - 160 feet above sea level. Soils in the area are typically clayey in the dry lake and gravelly sand outside of the dry lake. Vegetation is extremely sparse with brush and hummocks present around the boundaries of the dry lake. The only surface water occurs when the Benson/Ocotillo Dry Lake is filled with water during summer flash floods for a maximum of three or four days a year.

4. **SITE HISTORY:** The Benson/Ocotillo Dry Lake consisted of four parcels of land totaling 353.11 acres acquired in late 1941 and early 1942 by the Navy for use as a dive bombing target and an emergency landing field. Other designations for the site include Benson Dry Lake, Ocotillo Dry Lake, and Number 66. Two of the parcels, 160 acres (Marvin Ben Couch) and 85.21 acres (Elbert and Chesta Benson) were purchased on 19 November 1940. The other two parcels, 80 acres (John Sheran et al) and 27.90 acres (Elaine L. Wright et al) were acquired through a Declaration of Taking (condemnation) on 20 March 1941.

Prior to 1940, the site was used by the Navy as a landing field while conducting bombing practice north of the site. During the WWII era, the Navy, primarily NAS San Diego, used the site as a landing field and practice bomb target. Construction at the site included two dirt runways, both 2,500' by 400', with one going from east to west and the other northwest to south east. The bomb target was located in the northwest corner of the site and consisted of three concentric circles with diameters of 100, 200 and 400 feet with a target center. Practice bombs were used.

Following WWII, the site was no longer needed. By the end of 1947, the Navy had begun removing personnel, planes and equipment from the site. The acreage was declared excess to the needs of the Navy on 31 October 1955. On 17

August 1956, the United States conveyed the entire 353.11 acres to the County of San Diego with the restriction that the site be maintained as a public airport.

5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

AREA A

Size, Acres: 25.96
Former Use: Practice Bomb Target
Present Use: Public Airport
Probable End Use: Public Airport
Ordnance Presence: Confirmed
Type: Bomb, Practice: 3 lb, Mk 5 and Mk 23; and 100 lb, M38A2

AREA B

Size, Acres: 46.16
Former Use: Bomb Target Safety Zone
Present Use: Public Airport
Probable End Use: Public Airport
Ordnance Presence: Potential
Type: Bomb, Practice: 3 lb, Mk 5 and Mk 23; and 100 lb, M38A2

AREA C

Size, Acres: 280.99
Former Use: Remaining land
Present Use: Public Airport
Probable End Use: Public Airport
Ordnance Presence: None
Type: Not Applicable

6. CURRENT STATUS: The Archives Search Report (ASR) for Benson/Ocotillo Dry Lake was completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, in May 1997.

7. STRATEGY:

AREA A: RAC 3;EE/CA
AREA B: RAC 3;EE/CA
AREA C: RAC 5;NOFA

8. ISSUES AND CONCERNS: The Huntsville Center Technical Advisory Group reviewed this ASR on 19 May 1998 and determined RAC 3, EE/CA for Areas A and B based on the site inspection team's finding of inert practice bomb debris in Area A and the potential for practice bombs in Area B, which

surrounds Area A. The TAG determined RAC 5, NOFA for Area C and decided that the finding of one 25 lb practice bomb in the past was an isolated incident in which the item was removed from one area and placed in this area. There were no other witness accounts of OE findings at Benson/Ocotillo Dry Lake.

HNC Safety Comments: Safety concurs with the recommendations of the ASR and observes that RAC 3 seems high for the hazard involved. He recommends consideration of the RAC score at the TAG. He also mentions that remains of the target exist and that part of the target area is graded on a regular basis to keep the runway smooth.

Natural Resources: Federally and State threatened species occur within the general area of the site. They are listed in ASR Findings, Table 3-2, pages 7 - 8. An on-site inspection by appropriate State and Federal personnel may still be necessary to verify the presence, absence or location of listed species, or natural communities.

Historical Resources: No known historical or archaeological sites are located directly within project boundaries. However, eight prehistoric habitation sites are located within one mile of project lands. Any intrusive measures taken within the area will require oversight by the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) and/or other like organizations.

9. **SCHEDULE SUMMARY:** EE/CA

10. **FUNDING/BUDGET SUMMARY:** For Official Use Only