

RESTORATION INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES (FUDS)
PROJECT FACT SHEET
SEPTEMBER 1997
HNC REVISION: 27 JANUARY 1998
TAG REVIEW DATE: 4 FEBRUARY 1998

1. **SITE NAME:** Tisbury Great Pond

SITE NUMBER: D01MA045300

LOCATION:

City: Chilmark and West Tisbury
County: Dukes County
State: Massachusetts

PROJECT NUMBER: D01MA045301

CATEGORY: OE

INPR RAC: 2

ASR RAC: 2

TAG RAC: 2

2. **POC'S:**

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3. **SITE DESCRIPTION:** The former Tisbury Great Pond site consists of 496.7 acres included in the towns of West Tisbury and Chilmark, Dukes County, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. The site forms part of the south shore of the island Martha's Vineyard and borders the Atlantic Ocean. Tisbury Pond and the

small strip of land (16.7 acres) between the pond and the ocean was used by the military. Access can be realized by small watercraft across the pond or from the ocean. Access may also be obtained by following Long Point Road south to road's end and following dirt and sand trails west avoiding restricted areas fenced off to protect natural breeding grounds of Terns and Plovers. Tisbury Great Pond has developed into a shellfish harvest area and is under state control. The barrier beach area has been subdivided into numerous parcels now owned by many private owners who use it for beach recreation.

The terrain of the land portion of the former target area consists of a gently sloping beach, including small sand dunes. Native grasses thinly cover the small sand dunes above the Atlantic Ocean's high tide mark and on the inland slope down to the pond. The dunes slope gently downward to the water.

The Tisbury Great Pond is a salt water pond that fills during winter storms. Each spring, a natural channel, located on the western end of the sand spit, is reopened. This allows three to four feet of water to drain back to the ocean. Keeping the channel open enhances the oyster and soft-shell clam industry by reducing the depth and salinity of the pond. Tides of four to six inches are part of the water movement of the pond. The pond is also fed by runoff from Mill Brook, and the Tiasquam River.

Climate is relatively mild due to the moderating influence of the nearby Gulf Stream. The average summertime temperature is 67° F; the average winter temperature is 31° F. Average annual precipitation is 46 inches.

4. SITE HISTORY: Between 24 and 26 August 1943, 496.7 acres of land were acquired by lease and condemnation at Tisbury Great Pond, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, to serve as a dive bombing and strafing range in support of the fighter training program of Quonset Point Naval Air Station. Tracts obtained were as follows: 480 acres belonging to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was occupied under lease NOy(R)-35350; 11.1 acres, belonging to Doris b. Bigelow, occupied under lease NOy(R)-39456; and 5.6 acres of land belonging to the Tisbury Pond Club, occupied under Condemnation Leasehold bearing Massachusetts Misc. Civil Suit No. 6796. During the initial operational period of the range, strafing and masthead targets were constructed, at which student pilots could hone their gunnery and bombing skills utilizing .30 caliber ammunition, .50 caliber ammunition, and several practice bomb types.

By the end of World War II it is surmised that ordnance activity ceased on the Tisbury Target Area. However, on 27 March 1947 the target area was reinstated for practice bombing use by

the carrier fleet at Newport, Rhode Island. A masthead target was constructed about midway on the beach between Tisbury Great Pond and the ocean for fleet use. On 4 April 1947 the Navy suspended its bombing program on Tisbury Pond. On 18 April 1947 the navy gave final assurance that no more bombing would occur on Tisbury Great Pond.

On 6 May 1947 the Department of the Navy directed the cancellation of the Tisbury Target Area and the removal of targets from that location. On 29 July 1947 the commander of the 1st Naval District reported that the Tisbury Pond Target Area was excess to the needs of the Navy, that the site area had been disestablished, that the targets had been removed, and that the area had been decontaminated. These actions were said to constitute full restoration of those premises. On 30 June 1947, the Bureau of Lands and Docks terminated the two leases for 480 and 11.1 acres respectively. It is believed that the remaining tract of 5.6 acres was returned to the original landowner during the same time period.

5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

AREA A

Size, Acres:	24.00
Former Use:	Bombing and Strafing Target Area
Present Use:	Private Beach
Probable End Use:	Private Beach
Ordnance Presence:	Confirmed
Type:	3, 100, and 300 lb Practice Bombs

AREA B

Size, Acres:	40.00
Former Use:	Buffer Zone
Present Use:	Commercial Shell Fishing/Private Beach
Probable End Use:	Commercial Shell Fishing/Private Beach
Ordnance Presence:	Potential
Type:	3, 100, and 300 lb Practice Bombs

AREA C

Size, Acres:	432.70
Former Use:	Remaining Land
Present Use:	Commercial Shell Fishing
Probable End Use:	Commercial Shell Fishing
Ordnance Presence:	None
Type:	Not applicable

6. CURRENT STATUS: The Archives Search Report (ASR) for Tisbury Great Pond was completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, in October 1994.

7. STRATEGY:

AREA A: RAC 2;ESI
AREA B: RAC 2;ESI
AREA C: RAC 5;NOFA

8. ISSUES AND CONCERNS: The Huntsville Center Technical Advisory Group (TAG) reviewed this ASR and decided that this site warranted a strategy of ESI, RAC 2 in lieu of EE/CA, RAC 2 for **Areas A and B** recommended in the ASR. The TAG Concurred with the ASR recommendation for RAC 5, NOFA for **Area C**. The decision for an ESI is based on the fact that most of the site acreage is covered by water and the affects of wave action would seem to reduce the chance of OE being present: (1) The focus of concern is actually a narrow barrier beach of limited acreage extending east to west situated between Tisbury Great Pond to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. (2) The INPR states that the barrier beach is pushed northward by the ocean several feet each year so that the beach is now several hundred feet north of where it was when it was used by the military. During the ESI, present location of the beach would be compared with its location during the time of military use.

Several witnesses interviewed by the Site Inspection team stated that they had found practice bombs at the site. Shellfish wardens also provided a 1992 photo of practice bombs discovered and removed from the pond-side shoreline which were then inspected at their present location and determined to be explosives free. Finally, the site inspection team discovered the presence of what appeared to be the remains of a MK 15 series 100 lb. practice bomb on the pond side shoreline. Various historical documents state that only practice bombs were used at the site.

Area A, Bombing and Strafing Area, 24 Acres: This area is identified as where the bombing and strafing target was located, in the proximity of the beach at the southern border of the pond. The planes flew from north to south. OE identified in this area was MK 15 series 100 lb practice bomb, Mk 5 and MK 23 3 lb practice bombs, and 300 lb general purpose bomb bodies which were not loaded with high explosives. Sixteen of these acres extend into the pond and are used as a shellfishing harvest area. The other eight acres are part of the barrier beach between the pond and the ocean

Area B, Buffer Zone, 40 Acres: No OE was found in this area, but there is a potential for finding the practice bombs found in Area A. Area B surrounds Area A. Twenty-three acres extend into Tisbury Pond and the remaining acreage is part of the barrier beach.

Area C, Remaining Lands, 432.70 Acres: Area C does not lie in the proximity of the target area and a strategy of NOFA applies. The predominant portion of this area is part of the pond, with a small sand spit being the only land portion.

Access to Site: Site access may be gained only by boat or 4 wheel drive vehicle.

Natural Resources: Federally and State threatened species occur within the site area. They are listed in ASR Findings, para 3f and Table 3-2, page 7. 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 archeological or paleontological resources exist at the site. However, any intrusive measures taken within the area will require oversight by the State Historical Preservation Office and/or other like organizations.

9. **SCHEDULE SUMMARY:** ESI

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