

Archive Search at East Elliott, San Diego, California

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is preparing a series of Community Updates to inform citizens of the status and findings of ordnance and explosives (OE) cleanup actions at East Elliott, located in San Diego County. East Elliott is a 3,200-acre (5-square mile) area that lies within the boundaries of the City of San Diego. The site is bordered by Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, the City of Santee, State Highway 52, and Mission Trails Regional Park (Figure 1).

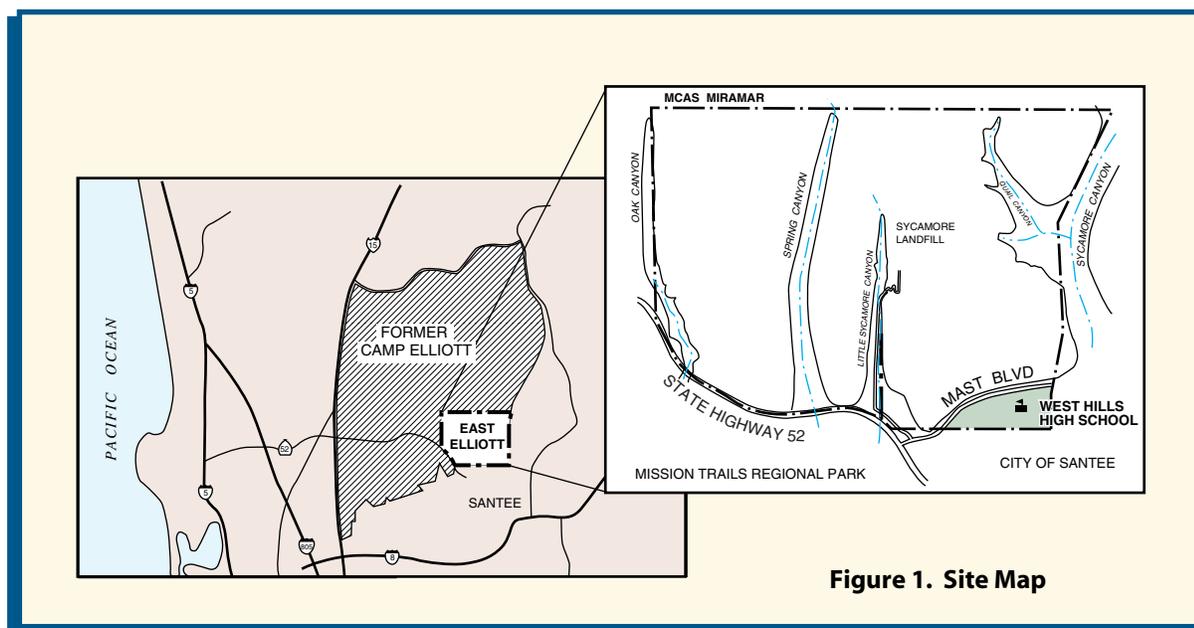


Figure 1. Site Map

Site Background

East Elliott comprises the southeast corner of former U.S. Marine Corps Camp Elliott, a training facility that was active from 1917 (as Camp Kearney) to 1960 and once occupied 30,500 acres. During the 1940s and 1950s live-fire training involving tanks and artillery (Figure 2) resulted in the presence of OE, including unexploded ordnance (UXO), within the area of East Elliott. This community update discusses an archive search that was conducted by USACE to gather information relating to past OE uses at East Elliott.

In recent years, considerable attention has been focused on OE investigations within the Tierrasanta and Mission Trail areas of former Camp Elliott located south and southwest of East Elliott. In 1983, two young boys in the Tierrasanta community were killed after disturbing an unexploded 37 millimeter high-explosive projectile while playing in the open space adjacent to their homes. Following this

accident, considerable public attention was brought to bear on OE hazards associated with former Camp Elliott. This event also provided the impetus for continued evaluation and active remediation of OE hazards in the area from 1984 to the present.

GLOSSARY

Ordnance and Explosives (OE) - OE describes anything related to munitions designed to cause damage to personnel or material through explosive force, incendiary action, or toxic effects. OE may include intact munitions, or munitions fragments.

Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) - Ordnance and explosives that have been primed, fused, armed, or otherwise prepared for action, and have been fired, dropped, launched, projected, or placed in such a manner as to constitute a hazard to operations, installation, personnel, or material and remain unexploded by either malfunction, design, or other cause. UXO is a subset of OE.



Topography of East Elliott



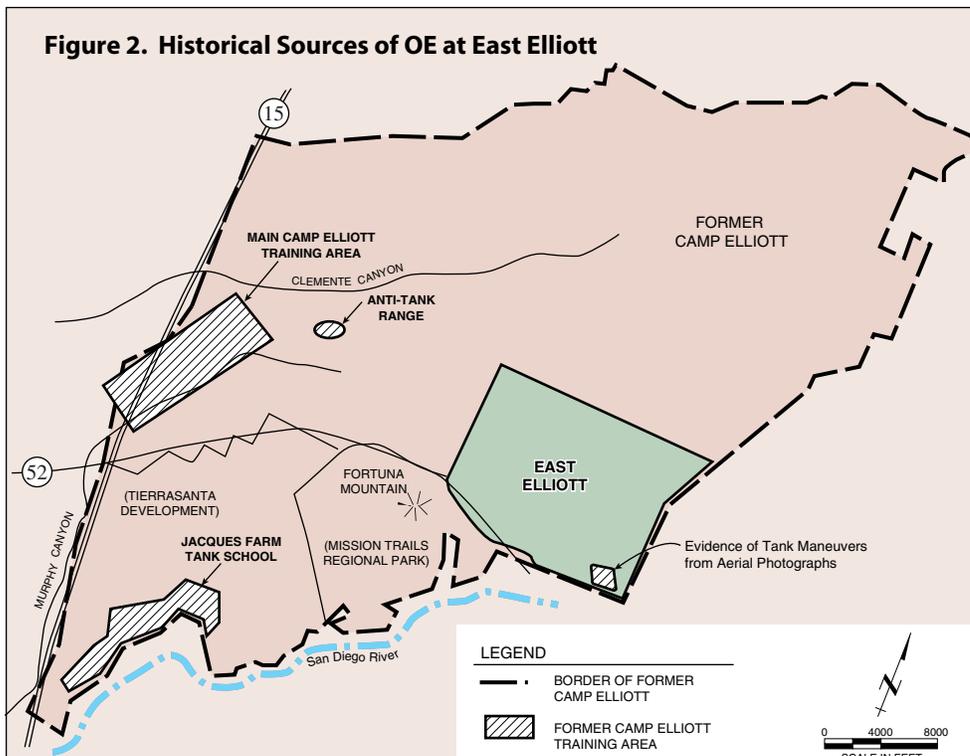
Sycamore Landfill

At East Elliott, site workers found UXO at several locations in the 1980s and 1990s. Additional evidence for the presence of UXO in East Elliott consisted of anecdotal reports of detonations during brush fires in the area. Investigations at East Elliott were conducted by Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams in 1984 and 1994. OE found during these investigations primarily consisted of high explosive shell fragments.

In 1996, EOD teams conducted a statistically-based OE investigation over the entire area of East Elliott. This investigation will be described in Community Update 2. OE was detected and removed from all areas of East Elliott; however, only four UXO items, all high explosive projectiles, were found during the sampling. The largest concentration of OE and UXO was on the western side of Little Sycamore Canyon in the central portion of East Elliott. In 1998 through 1999, EOD teams performed surface and subsurface removals over a 53-acre area adjacent to the Sycamore Landfill to support expansion of the landfill perimeter. Surface removal was also



West Hills High School and Mast Blvd.



performed over a 900-acre area in the southeast portion of East Elliott to reduce imminent risks to site users. Forty-eight UXO and over 1,300 pounds of OE scrap metal were removed from these areas. These removal actions will be described in Community Update 3.

East Elliott Today

The 3,200 acres that comprise East Elliott were to private individuals, developers, and the City of San Diego during the period 1963 to 1974. Current land use at East Elliott consists of undeveloped open space and the Sycamore Landfill, a 170-acre Class III privately-operated sanitary landfill. The open space within East Elliott consists of 165 parcels owned by individuals. Parcel owners include over 85 private property owners, the cities of San Diego and Santee, California, several land development firms, two school districts,



California gnatcatcher

and a public utility company. West Hills High School is located in the southeast corner of the site.

Although the majority of East Elliott is privately-owned, unrestricted access along its southern boundary makes it attractive for a variety of recreational uses, including hiking, mountain biking, jogging, motor biking, horseback riding, and off-road vehicle use. Rock climbers also use several clusters of large boulders located near the southeast corner of the site. Several dirt roads and trails are located along the ridges and canyons.

The City of San Diego Planning Department has evaluated the biological resources of East Elliott in the context of its draft regional plans for open space and habitat protection. Over 65 percent of the habitat within East Elliott is considered to be of



Rock Climbing Area in the Southeast Corner of East Elliott

"very high" value. Sensitive species identified in the vicinity of East Elliott include willow monardella, San Diego ambrosia, least Bell's vireo, and California gnatcatcher. Three probable future land use scenarios have been identified for East Elliott: 1) dedicated open space (i.e., undeveloped) with habitat preserves and continued recreational use; 2) landfill construction; and 3) residential construction, consisting of a mix of single family residences, schools, and open space. The Sycamore Landfill is currently planning to continue expanding to encompass 500 acres. The City of San Diego has also tentatively proposed the area between Oak and Spring Canyons as the location of a new 700-acre landfill; construction for the new

landfill would begin in 2005. In addition, the continued population growth and development of the San Diego area may result in increased pressure to develop privately owned parcels.

East Elliott Archives Search

An archive search is a detailed examination of historical records for a specified purpose. The East Elliott Archives Search was aimed at collecting information on past uses of ordnance at various portions of the former Camp Elliott, with special emphasis on East Elliott. The archive search assembled historical records and available field data, assessed potential ordnance presence, and recommended OE follow-up actions. The sources of this information included the reference data used in compiling prior ordnance risk assessments, existing investigation reports, interviews concerning actual or rumored incidents of OE disposal, interviews concerning past and current uses of the site, military files (including maps and range fans), real estate information, historical aerial photographs, and other archive data sources (including sources at a local, regional, and national level). A historical summary of operations and testing at the site was prepared using this information.

The information gathered during the archive search was presented in the Archive Search Report, which was prepared by Montgomery Watson for the USACE, and released, to the public in January 1995. The findings were presented in the context of: 1) areas of probable OE contamination within East Elliott, 2) general risks to the public given current and anticipated land uses, and 3) impacts on proposed geophysical sampling necessary to complete the East Elliott Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA), a feasibility study to examine potential OE removal actions at East Elliott.

The Archive Search Report indicated that OE had been found at several areas of East Elliott. The majority of this OE was located in the southeast quadrant of the study area, between Little Sycamore Canyon and the eastern border of East Elliott. The source of OE was likely to have been ordnance training in the 1940s with ordnance firing from fixed locations and potentially from tanks on maneuvers. Features depicted on historical aerial photos include a cluster of elliptical roadways in the southeast corner of East Elliott that appear to have been used for tank maneuvers. The road along the eastern perimeter of the site also appears to have been used by military vehicles. Interviews with veterans confirmed that the mesas and ridges in East Elliott were used for tank training maneuvers. The location and orientation of ordnance discovered during a 1996 site investigation further suggests that the tanks were fired toward the northwest and west from the southeast corner of East Elliott and the eastern perimeter road.

The Archive Search Report recommended that the EE/CA be supported by a statistical sampling of OE to determine hazard probabilities at East Elliott. This investigation, which was conducted in 1996 by the USACE, is discussed in Community Update 2.

If You Encounter Ordnance at East Elliott ...

UXO items capable of causing injury or death have been discovered at East Elliott. UXO removal actions conducted by USACE have reduced, but may not have completely eliminated, the presence of UXO at East Elliott. If you encounter munitions or buried metal objects at East Elliott, do not attempt to touch, disturb, or move them. Call the San Diego Emergency Services at 911.



37mm and 75mm Shells Found at East Elliott

Information Repositories

To gain a more thorough understanding of the history of East Elliott and the activities associated with the proposed OE removal activities, the public is encouraged to review relevant documents, maintained in the information repositories for East Elliott at the following locations:

San Diego City Library, Tierrasanta Branch

4978 La Cuenta Drive
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 573-1384

San Diego County Library, Santee Branch

9225 Carlton Hills Blvd
Santee, CA 92071
(619) 448-1863

For More Information

For more information on USACE's removal actions at East Elliott, please contact:

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