



Division of Spill Prevention and Response Contaminated Sites Program

 search

DEC State of Alaska

State of Alaska > DEC > SPAR > CSP > Site Summaries

FORMER ADAK NAVAL AIR FACILITY



[View detailed information from the database on this site.](#)

Database Name: Adak

Status: Active

Location: Adak

Latitude: See database entries

Longitude: See database entries

This site has a [Restoration Advisory Board](#), which involves the community.

DEC Contaminated Sites contact: [Guy Warren](#), (907) 269-7528, Fax (907) 269-7649 (Anchorage)

U.S. Navy contact: [Justin Peach](#), Remedial Technical Manager for Adak, Naval Facilities Engineering Command – Northwest, 1101 Tautog Circle, Suite 203, Silverdale, WA 98315, (360) 396-0082

U.S. EPA contact: [Christopher Cora](#), Remedial Project Manager for Adak, Office of Environmental Cleanup, Environmental Protection Agency, 1200 Sixth Ave., Mail Stop ECL-115, Seattle, WA 98101, (206) 553-1478, Fax (206) 553-0124 / 0957

Contacts updated: June 16, 2014

PDF Version

Summary updated: June 2005

Click on photos or maps for larger versions.

Description

The former Adak Naval Air Facility occupies approximately 76,800 acres on Adak Island and is part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The southern half of Adak Island is also a federal wilderness area. Since the early 1940s, the northern half of Adak Island has been used for military operations. Army installations at Adak allowed U.S. forces to mount a successful offensive against the Japanese-held islands of Kiska and Attu. After the War, Adak was developed as a Naval air station, playing an important role during the Cold War as a submarine surveillance center.

In 1994 the base was added to the National Priority List of contaminated sites, under the terms of the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). The air station's military mission ended on March 31, 1997, and the base was closed that year under the Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC).

An agreement signed by the Navy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and The Aleut Corporation in September 2000 allowed the United States, acting by and through the Department of Interior (DOI) and the Department of the Navy, to enter into a land exchange agreement with The Aleut Corporation (TAC), a Native Regional Corporation. This exchange took place in March 2004, transferring 47,271 acres of the northern portion of Adak, including the downtown area, housing units, and industrial facilities, to The Aleut Corporation. TAC exchanged surface and subsurface property from their Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act entitlement lands, mostly in the Shumagin Islands. Under the terms of the land transfer agreement, the Adak airfield was transferred to the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities for operation and maintenance.

The Aleut Corporation plans to develop Adak into a community that includes a fish processing industry, fueling facility, and a hub for air cargo traffic. Population on the island ranges



Map courtesy of the U.S. Navy, showing the Naval Air Facility and the Naval Security Group Action area.

seasonally from 50 to 300 people, depending on the season. For more background, see the [U.S. Navy's Adak website](#).

Through military operations over the years, releases of hazardous chemicals occurred via spills and historical disposal practices. The Navy has identified numerous sites with contamination from past Air Facility activities. Since the military mission ended in March 1997, the Navy has been involved in the environmental restoration, cleanup and closure activities as the responsible party, following the federal CERCLA standards for protecting people, animals, and the environment. DEC oversees the cleanup to assure it meets the State of Alaska standards for protection of human health and the environment. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also oversees the cleanup. The Navy, DEC and EPA seek community involvement via a [Restoration Advisory Board](#), run by the Navy.



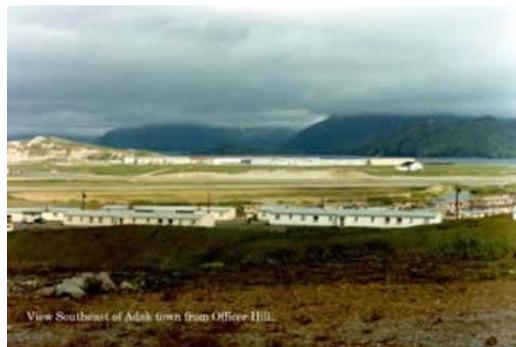
World War II lookout post overlooking Kuluk Bay -- Photo by Paul Roberts

For technical and administrative purposes, Adak was divided into two operable units (OUs), A and B in 1998. Operable Unit A encompasses the entire military reservation with respect to chemical contamination, while OU B encompasses the entire military reservation with respect to ordnance contamination. Use of live ordnance on Adak was primarily limited to training ranges and their associated impact areas during the World War II era. Operable Unit B includes two subunits, B-1 and B-2. The sites in OU B-1 include the downtown and remote exchange areas identified for transfer. OU B-2 includes areas identified for retention by the U.S. Navy; these sites are the only non-transferable land exchange parcels concerning ordnance issues as of January 2003. All other ordnance sites (OU B-1 sites) as of that date have been investigated, cleaned up as needed, and found not to pose an unacceptable risk, making them transferable.

Public Health and Environmental Concerns

There were 181 sites listed or evaluated for chemical and/or petroleum contamination under Operable Unit A at Adak. Contaminants included petroleum, metals, pesticides, and volatile organic compounds. Contamination was identified in soil, surface water, sediment, and as free phase or dissolved contaminants in the groundwater. Fuel tanks and lines, drum disposal areas, spill sites, pits for waste oil disposal/firefighting training, and several landfills made up the majority of chemical and petroleum contaminant sources on the island.

Surface waters in the area are used for sport, subsistence, and commercial fishing. Investigations considered the possibility of personnel being exposed to contaminants through the skin or accidental ingestion of contaminated soil or water. Exposure was also considered through ingestion of fish or shellfish that may have been affected by the site. Threatened ecological resources included migratory birds, wetlands, spawning and feeding fish, and various marine mammals.



View southeast of Adak-- Photos by Paul Roberts

Over 200 potential UXO sites have been identified under Adak's OU B. This contamination is primarily a result of World War II munitions storage, handling and training. Unexploded ordnance (UXO) represents safety as well as environmental risks when left in place, however, finding and removing it can be extremely difficult. Restrictions on access and future use of the land are commonly used to protect people and the environment from UXO.

Current Status

Contaminants - Most sites with chemical contamination on the former installation have been investigated and remediation has been completed or is in progress at all but two sites. The Aleut Corporation has received the transfer of land comprising the downtown area, port facilities, utilities infrastructure and light industrial, administration, commercial, recreation and residential areas. The land transfer agreement defines the limits of future environmental liability, set by both DEC and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Institutional Controls - ([glossary link](#)) Institutional controls are measures to prevent or limit exposure to hazardous substances left at a site and are an important part of the cleanup on Adak Island. Total cleanup of all hazardous substances is costly and at times impossible. Contamination left in place will slowly break down while access to it is prevented. Institutional controls on Adak Island include land use restrictions, fish advisories, excavation permits and reporting on maintaining land use controls. There are also engineering controls such as fences and signs in the Navy ordnance areas, landfill covers, and treatment and monitoring systems, including groundwater monitoring wells. Land use restrictions are used to ensure that land use assumptions utilized in establishing cleanup levels remain valid. An education program on Adak Island adds to the success of institutional controls by familiarizing residents and visitors about fish advisories, ordnance safety, and institutional controls. For more information on Adak ICs, please see the [Navy's website on institutional controls](#) and an [April 2003 fact sheet on institutional controls](#) (pdf).

Ordnance - Nearly all sites contaminated with ordnance have been investigated and remediation has been completed on three quarters of the sites; documentation remains to be processed on several of the remediated sites. Twenty-two OU B sites, however, are within the boundaries of Parcel 4 Exclusion Zone at Andrew Lake. This parcel will not be transferred in the foreseeable future. See the recent "Finding of Suitability to Transfer" (FOST [pdf file available at Navy's Adak website](#)) for more detail. Ordnance hazard signs are in place on the island for sites that are not

being transferred (i.e., those within Parcel 4). Fences and gates to restrict access at Parcel 4 are also in place at areas that will be retained by the Navy. Despite extensive efforts over many years to clear ordnance and explosives, it is possible some may still exist on the former Naval Air Facility. An Ordnance Education Program is in place to familiarize on-island residents and visitors about the need for ordnance awareness on Adak. It familiarizes personnel with the history of the presence of ordnance on the island, basic characteristics of OE/UXO items, and procedures to follow if a suspected item is encountered.

See also the [Navy's Adak website page of current events](#).

Major areas of work

- ▶ In 1990, the Navy and EPA signed a Federal Facilities Compliance Agreement to govern corrective action at hazardous waste sites. In 1993, the Navy, EPA, and DEC signed a Federal Facilities Agreement to establish a procedural framework and schedule for CERCLA response actions. In 1994, Navy and DEC signed agreements for investigation and remediation of petroleum release sites and storage tank assessments/upgrades.
- ▶ Since 1989, the Navy has removed hundreds of underground storage tanks, closed miles of fuel pipelines, and cleaned associated fuel-contaminated soil.
- ▶ A 1996 preliminary screening evaluation and a 1997 remedial investigation and feasibility study were conducted to assess the risks to human health and the environment. This assessment resulted in an island-wide remedial program that included free product recovery and groundwater monitoring systems, sludge lagoon remediation, sediment removal and treatment, landfill restoration, and institutional controls to minimize the potential for exposure to contamination.
- ▶ In the late 1990s, extensive UXO removal actions were conducted in the downtown Adak area.
- ▶ In 2001 a Record of Decision establishing cleanup levels for unexploded ordnance was signed by DEC, the US Navy and the Environmental Protection Agency. This record of decision was considered one of the first of its kind nationally because of the extensive involvement by the community, the future landowners, and other critical stakeholders in the development of the investigation and cleanup strategies. Much of the ordnance cleanup is already complete, and the rest will take place in the next few years.
- ▶ September and October, 2003 - An amendment to the OU A record of decision (ROD) was signed. The amendment modifies the requirements for the subsistence fish advisory signs along the shores of Sweeper Cove and Kuluk Bay, and replaces them with fact sheets to target the residents of the City of Adak. The fact sheets provide a greater level of detail on the presence of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in specific species, and also discuss potential health risks and benefits associated with fish consumption. Since recreational fishing does not pose a health risk, advisory or educational materials are not be prepared regarding these exposure scenarios. The ROD amendment also removes sixty-two (62) petroleum sites from the OU A ROD and clearly establishes Alaska's oil pollution regulations, 18 AAC 75, as the basis for regulatory procedures and requirements for future petroleum cleanup decisions. See more on the ROD amendment at [the Navy's website](#).
- ▶ May 2005 - The Decision Document for Petroleum Sites with No Unacceptable Risks was signed by the Navy and ADEC. This Decision Document outlined the selected remedies for 10 of the Petroleum Sites removed by the OU A ROD Amendment.



Adak was one of many remote sites in Alaska where dishes for communications were installed in the mid-1950's as part of the White Alice defense communications system.

U.S. Navy map of major areas of contamination in and around Adak.

More maps available on the [Navy's maps page](#) on their Adak website.

History

1867 – The United States acquired Alaska from Russia in 1867, since then Adak Island has been federal property.

1910 – Over-hunting by outsiders nearly depleted the once-abundant sea otter and fur seal populations.

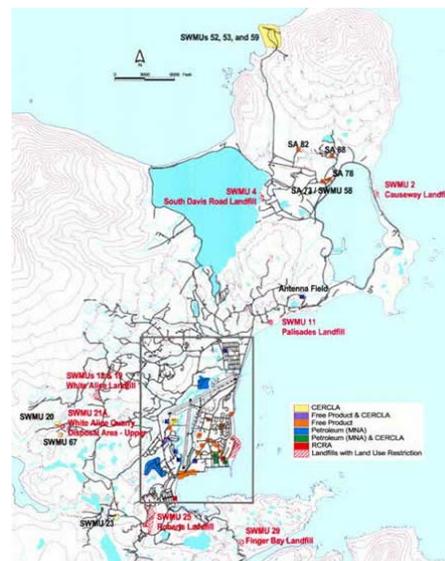
1913 – Adak Island was included in the 2.9-million-acre Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge (renamed the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge in 1980)
 World War II - Aleuts in the island chain were evacuated to internment camps and future land use was restricted. Adak was used to launch offensive on the Japanese-occupied islands of Kiska and Attu,

1940 - The island was added to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

1959 – Navy presence at Adak was officially recognized by Public Land Order (PLO) No. 1949, dated August 19, 1959, which withdrew land on the northern half of the Island, comprising approximately 76,800 acres, for use by the Navy for military purposes.

1980 – All of Adak Island was included within the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge established by Congress in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, and it remains part of that refuge today.

1992 – In October 1992, the Naval Air Facility (NAF) Adak was proposed for addition to the National



Map courtesy of the U.S. Navy
 CERCLA - Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
 MNA - Monitored Natural Attenuation
 RCRA - Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
 SWMU = Solid Waste Management Unit.

Priorities List of contaminated sites under CERCLA.

1994 – In May 1994, NAF Adak was placed on the National Priorities List (NPL).

1995 – Former NAF Adak was selected for closure in July 1995 under the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process.

1997 – The military mission of the former Navy base ended in March 1997. Since that time the Navy has been involved in the environmental restoration, cleanup and closure activities that will allow for lease and transfer of property on Adak to the USFW and non-federal entities.

1998 – An interim lease was signed in June 1998 between the Navy and the Adak Reuse Corporation (ARC) for use of the main developed area (i.e., downtown) in Parcel 1A.

Map of parcels for land exchanges

1998 – For technical and administrative purposes, Adak was divided into two operable units (OUs): OU A encompasses the entire military reservation with respect to chemical contamination, while OU B encompasses the entire military reservation with respect to ordnance contamination.

1998 – In the fall the Navy completed clearance of the Solid Waste Management Unit (SWMU) 2 minefield.

1998 – The Navy removed loose asbestos debris and abated or remediated (in place) asbestos found in more than 300 buildings.

1999 – A Record of Decision (ROD) outlining cleanup alternatives was prepared for chemical contamination on the entire military base (OU A)

July 1999 – Under the provisions of the existing Federal Facilities Agreement for the cleanup of the former Navy base at Adak Island and in order to address issues of concern, the Navy, EPA, and the State of Alaska formed an OU B Project Team.

2000 – Record of Decision (ROD) for OU A was signed. This Record of Decision covered petroleum sites and Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) sites.

2001 – The ROD for OU B-1 was signed by the Navy, EPA, and DEC in December 2001.

2002 – The Navy demolished 52 unsafe cabins. The work began in June and was finished on August 20. The demolition debris from the structures was disposed of in Roberts Landfill in an area specifically designated for inert demolition debris.

April 2002 – Lead Based Paint (LBP) Survey and Risk Assessment Report completed. Based on this report, the Navy chose lead abatement as a permanent solution to LBP associated hazards. The LBP was removed from door systems and thresholds in selected Kuluk Bay housing units. In addition, cleaning of surfaces was performed to reduce lead concentrations below levels required by HUD guidance.

March 14, 2003 – Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation prepared a report titled 2003 Environmental Baseline Study. The report presents the findings and conclusions of an environmental baseline survey (EBS) that supports base realignment and closure activities at the Former NAF Adak, Alaska. It is an update to an EBS prepared in March 2002 by Environmental Chemical Corporation.

September and October, 2003 There are 43 active sites in Adak (four in OU A, 17 in OU B-1, and 22 in OU B-2) listed in DEC's contaminated sites database and 3 listed in DEC's database of leaking underground storage tanks. Reports on the status of each are available in DEC's [databases](#) . An amendment to the OU A ROD was signed. The amendment modifies the requirements for the subsistence fish advisory signs along the shores of Sweeper Cove and Kuluk Bay, and replaces them with fact sheets to target the residents of the City of Adak. It also removes sixty-two (62) petroleum sites from the OU A ROD and clearly establishes Alaska's oil pollution regulations, 18 AAC 75, as the basis for regulatory procedures and requirements for future petroleum cleanup decisions.

May 2005 - The Decision Document for Petroleum Sites with No Unacceptable Risk is signed by the Department and the Navy. The Decision Document outlines the selected remedy for 10 petroleum sites removed from the OU A ROD by the OU A ROD Amendment.

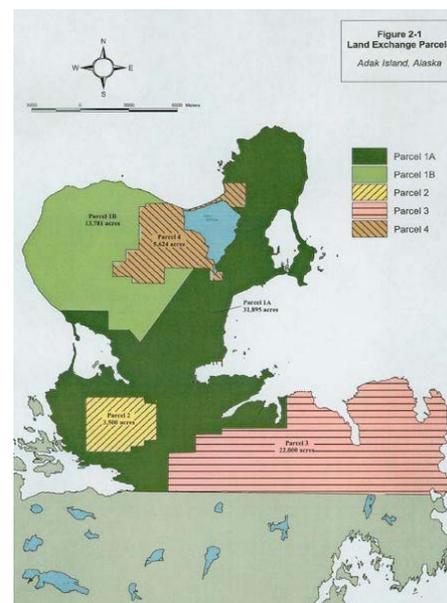
More Information

DEC's database of contaminated sites

There are 43 active sites in Adak (four in OU A, 17 in OU B-1, and 22 in OU B-2) listed in DEC's contaminated sites database and 3 listed in DEC's database of leaking underground storage tanks. Reports on the status of each are available on DEC's [databases](#). Please note: the database entries on Adak have not been updated in some time. Please bear with us until we update them.

Documents

- ▶ Proposed Plan - Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Building (T-1416 Expanded Area), August 2005 ([PDF 841K](#)) with preferred cleanup alternative
- ▶ DEC fact sheet on Adak Operable Unit B-1, January 2000 ([PDF 16K](#))



Map courtesy of the U.S. Navy.

Records of Decision

Final Decision Document, NMCB Building T-1416 Expanded Area, broken into 8 parts for ease of download, dated March 14, 2005

- ▶ [Executive Summary and Section 1 of the NMCB Decision Document \(PDF 2.5 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [Section 2 of the NMCB Decision Document \(PDF 1.4 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [Sections 3 and 4 of the NMCB Decision Document \(PDF 1.4 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [Section 5 of the NMCB Decision Document \(PDF 1.0 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [Section 6 of the NMCB Decision Document \(PDF 1.0 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [Section 7 of the NMCB Decision Document \(PDF 2.5 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [Sections 8 through 14 of the NMCB Decision Document \(PDF 1.4 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [Appendix A and Plates 1 and 2 of the NMCB Decision Document \(PDF 5.3 MB\)](#)

Final Decision Document for Petroleum Sites With No Unacceptable Risk, Former Adak Naval Complex, broken into six parts for ease of download, dated April 29, 2005

- ▶ [Sections 1 - 3 \(PDF 3.7 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [Sections 4 - 14 \(PDF 1.7 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [Appendix A and Appendix B - part 1 \(PDF 2.1 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [part 2 \(PDF 1.4 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [part 3 \(PDF 2.1 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [part 4 \(PDF 3.6 MB\)](#)
- ▶ [OUA ROD Amendment \(PDF\)](#), dated September 4, 2003
- ▶ Record of Decision for Operable Unit B-1 ([PDF 3.1MB](#)) December 4, 2001
- ▶ Record of Decision for OUA, dated April 2000: [Summary](#), html file. [Complete file](#), (14 MB, zipped)

Links off DEC web pages

- ▶ Navy website on Adak: <http://www.adakupdate.com/>
- ▶ Other EPA information: [About CERCLA](#), [About the Superfund](#).
- ▶ Final Finding of Suitability to Transfer (FOST) [Parcel 1A](#), [Parcel 1B](#), and [Addendum to Final parcel 1A](#), link to Navy's website
- ▶ Aleutian Reuse Committee of The Aleut Corporation website on Adak: <http://www.alaska.net/~vwadak/>
- ▶ [US EPA's website on Adak cleanup](#)
- ▶ [Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study report](#), 2001, link to Navy's site

[Glossary/Acronyms](#) [Site Map](#) [Commissioner](#) [Public Notices](#) [External Links](#)

*Department of Environmental Conservation
Division of Spill Prevention and Response
410 Willoughby Ave., Ste. 302
P.O. Box 111800
Juneau, AK 99811-1800*

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