

Military Wasteland

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ter and soil. Additional demolition, target and rocket areas were also discovered.

Though contractors removed hundreds of munitions in a surface clearing atop the site's Central Valley floor, where Lacamas Creek flows through a meadow, over \$20 million in clean-up costs remain.

Deeply buried munitions still lurk 2 inches to 14 inches or lower below the surface. Landfills and lead-contaminated soils are among other areas of contamination. Only two of the five "Remedial Action Units" of contaminated areas have been cleaned up.

The county roughly expects clean up to last another five to seven years, while others estimate 10 more years.

New Funding for Cleanup

The contracting team agreed to leave the site in 2010 and lease the property back to the county, rent-free until July 15, 2011. Today, the lease has been extended until Aug. 15, allowing the county to pursue more funding from the Army.

The Army is expected to provide funds to continue clean up.

"We have been making slow, gradual progress toward a funding agreement," said Jeff Mize, public information manager for Clark County Public Works. In the end, he says "It's the Army's responsibility to clean up the property."

Previously, the Army criticized prime contractor, Mike Gage, for what they considered to be inappropriate use of funds including lavish entertainment and travel expenses, and refused to offer any more resources.

"If we had a perfect understanding of what was on the site 10 years ago, we might be further along," said Mize.

EPA Warnings Disregarded

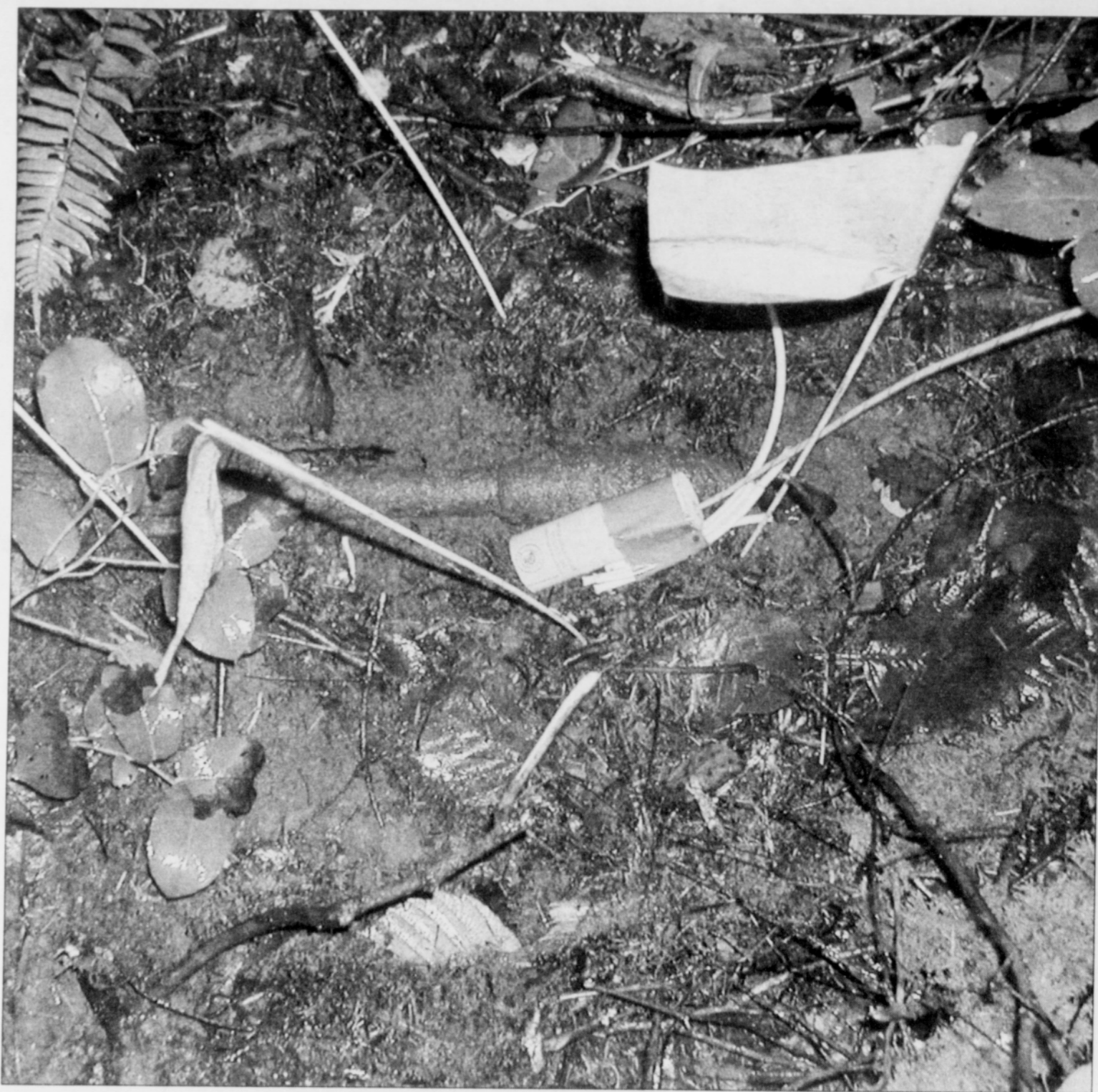
Dvija Michael Bertish, a local environmentalist and member of the Rosemere Neighborhood Association, said the County may have prevented the current clean-

up failures if the Army and state did not refuse help from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, who withdrew from the project in 2003 after 7 years of involvement.

In a letter to the Army, the EPA stated their official withdrawal from Camp Bonneville's closure team, citing that there were "significant data gaps and procedural shortfalls at Camp Bonneville" as a result of the Army's "lack of cooperation and collaboration."

Other concerns the EPA stated were; the Army's incomplete and faulty description of the site's contaminants, a lack of information about property transfers, and a limited understanding about the extent of contamination from munitions, unexploded ordnances, and areas of chemical releases.

With extensive contamination remaining in 2009, Bertish petitioned for the EPA's return and requested new site assessments with consideration that the property be placed on the National Priorities Superfund List.



Military ordnance from a training base east of Vancouver still at risk exploding.

left footing the Army's mess, Bertish hopes the EPA's involvement will be the leverage to find funding and clean up Camp Bonneville in a proper and timely manner.

Bombs an "acceptable risk?"

While county officials explain

life refuge, while the public park will be divided among two areas. The most intense public use area for tent camping and unrestricted use will be on the lower Valley floor, where "subsurface clearing" will have been completed, while a more restricted area on the Western Slopes will limit hikers to trails and roads, away from potentially dangerous areas.

Areas heavily impacted with fired artillery will be off limits to the public and protected by 5-strand barbed wire fences, he said. And of course, no park will exist until Camp Bonneville is cleaned up according to plan.

"Even after cleanup is complete, bombs will remain on site in perpetuity, said Bertish, stating that unexploded munitions may be buried deeper than subsurface clearing. "This is not an appropriate risk to have a public park adjacent to bombs on the site."

Barry Rogowski, a manager with Washington State's department of Ecology, said "Park rangers trained in munitions safety and identification will make sure public safety is taken care of," along with "ongoing safeguards, public education and notification, and institutional controls (such as no digging) to minimize any risk to the public."

The Army released an infor-

mational cartoon booklet called Larry the Lizard on the Lookout for parents with children "who may find remnants of unexploded ordinance while playing or exploring in the area" of the future public park.

With drawings and colorful photos, the book tells kids, "If there's metal on the ground, tell someone what you found," and "If glass or wire is what you see, tell someone quick and let it be."

A history of assault on the land

From 1909 to 1995, under the ownership of U.S. Army, the forested property was used by various branches of the military as artillery ranges for pistols, rifles, machine guns, howitzers, live hand grenades, rocket launchers, mortar training shells, and a list of other military weaponry.

Investigations in 1995 concluded over 20 areas of concern for restoration including four landfills, three grease pits, drum burials, paint and solvent burials, burn pits, maintenance pits, pesticide mixing storage buildings, a former sewage pond, and more.

Among the chemical warfare service activities on the site were three ammunition bunkers, two gas chambers, a mustard-training area, tear gas capsules, smoke pots, land mines, etc.



Possible unexploded military munitions make Camp Bonneville a public danger.

The petition won, and the EPA began conducting a site investigation May 2011 in Phase 1, collecting groundwater, soil, and Lacamas Creek samples. The results are still under review, and Phase 2 sampling begins this month.

Worried the county may be involved in legal conundrum and

that bombs on the site is an "acceptable risk" for a public park, some public citizens argue the opposite. Jerry Barnett, the county's project manager for Camp Bonneville said, "It would be a different sort of park than what we are used to."

He explains that two-thirds of the property will remain a wild-