

The Restoration Advisory Board (RAB)

Involving the Public

In keeping with the goal of full public involvement in environmental restoration decisions and activities, the Army encourages creation of a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB). The RAB is a forum for discussion and exchange of information about environmental restoration programs under the Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) program.

The primary purpose for establishing a RAB is to involve the local community in the decision making process for environmental responses by:

- Making information about the environmental processes, risks and progress available to the public.
- Establishing a formal forum for public participation on the project.

Restoration Advisory Board members should include representatives from:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Spring Valley community
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- District of Columbia Department of Health
- Local government, e.g., ANCs

A Restoration Advisory Board is NOT always established. The decision whether or not to form a RAB is made by the commander and the Corps' project manager based on the level of community interest in the project.

When a Restoration Advisory Board is established, the members are expected to:

- Provide input to environmental restoration issues to Army Corps of Engineers and regulatory agencies

- Hold regular meetings, which are publicly announced and open to the public at convenient times and locations
- Review, evaluate and comment on project documents
- Recommend priorities
- Identify applicable standards for cleanup
- Propose cleanup levels consistent with planned land use as specified in the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)

A key to understanding the purpose of the Restoration Advisory Board is recognizing the value of true public involvement.

A progressive and successful public involvement program prevents delays and assists, rather than deters, the project. A Restoration Advisory Board that represents the entire community establishes the basis for public rapport.

Establishment of the Restoration Advisory Board requires a careful, well-planned process.

- 1 Select co-chairpersons from the Corps and the Spring Valley community
- 2 Select members from the Corps, regulatory agencies and community, via the RAB Membership Selection Panel
- 3 Establish procedures to handle membership resignations and additions
- 4 Define administrative, technical and public affairs support responsibilities
- 5 Establish funding for public participation, and administrative and technical support
- 6 Implement communication program for community involvement and notifications

Selection of the community members who will be on the RAB follows its own five-step process.

Step
(1)

Corps project manager, in consultation with the District of Columbia Department of Health and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, identifies diverse community interests (business/ home owners' associations, local officials, civic groups, environmental groups, environmental justice groups; e.g., low income/ minority groups, etc.).

Step
(2)

Corps project manager, in consultation with the same groups as in Step One, organizes a selection panel of community members to nominate RAB members who represent a cross-section of diverse community groups.

Step
(3)

The selection panel identifies community interest groups that must be represented on the RAB, works with the Corps to develop a solicitation process, and establishes the criteria for selecting RAB members. Participation opportunities will be announced through news releases, public notices and the Internet. The panel develops a community interest forum to identify local concerns and levels of interest, and establish a deadline

RAB

SPRING VALLEY RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD

for submission of the completed community applications. Through the Corps, letters of invitation, fact sheets and application forms will be mailed to selected groups and individuals. This information will also be placed in local information repositories and on the Corps' website. There will be a public meeting to discuss the purpose of the RAB, explain the solicitation process and member responsibilities, and distribute fact sheets and application forms. At the close of the solicitation period, the selection committee develops the list of recommended RAB members.

Step (4)

Corps commander, in consultation with partners, reviews and accepts RAB membership list. Selection panel is disbanded.

Step (5)

Corps District sends selection letters to RAB members and response letters to all who submitted community interest forms. The final action is to publish notices of RAB membership and the meeting time for the first RAB meeting.



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