



December 2024

**Subject:** Fort Rousseau, Sitka, Alaska, under the Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS) program.

## Introduction

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is distributing this fact sheet to inform the community of Sitka regarding the ongoing environmental investigation and cleanup activities at the Fort Rousseau Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS). This fact sheet presents background information and a summary of investigation and cleanup work completed within the upland areas across the islands comprising Fort Rousseau, and a summary of completed investigation work and planned activities within the intertidal area adjacent to the former Virublennoi Island landfill.

## Site Background

The Fort Rousseau FUDS is located west of Japonski Island in Sitka, Alaska. The site is comprised of 8 islands connected by a causeway and encompasses approximately 65 acres of land immediately west of the Sitka airport. The uplands are managed by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation (DNR-DPOR), and the intertidal areas are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The islands were chosen as military installation sites during WWII due to their strategic value for protecting the Naval Air Station on Japonski Island against attacks from the Pacific.

As part of the Sitka Harbor Defenses, the Army constructed a causeway to connect the island chain to Japonski Island to provide both road access and a conduit for utilities to Fort Rousseau. Features constructed on the islands included gun emplacements, observation towers, command posts, personnel shelters, artillery magazines, ration storehouses, fuse houses, motor sheds, officers' quarters, storehouses, barracks, dayrooms, and mess halls. The Fort was reportedly decommissioned in 1944. Many of the features are now overgrown, in a state of decay, or have been removed. Historical sources indicate the Harbor Defenses of Fort Rousseau were never engaged in active combat during WWII. On April 2, 2008, the site became the Fort Rousseau Causeway State Historical Park.

## Uplands Areas Environmental Cleanup

Previous environmental investigations across the islands identified areas of concern including the upland portions of: Nevski Island West Dump; Reshimosti Island Dump #2; Sasedni Island Earthen Pit; Makhnati Island Ammunition Magazine #1; Makhnati Island Southeast Vault; and Virublennoi Landfill. A concurrent limited removal of metal drums and lead-acid batteries and battery fragments was conducted during investigation field efforts. Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dioxins, and metals (lead and silver) were identified in soil at concentrations exceeding screening levels.

Based on the investigations, the identified chemicals of concern (COCs) included dioxins, PCBs, diesel-range organics (DRO), residual range organics (RRO), lead, silver and mercury. The selected remedial action (RA) of excavation with offsite treatment or disposal was completed in 2018 at these areas of concern. Contaminated soil was excavated and removed from Nevski, Reshimosti, Sasedni, and Makhnati Islands, and contaminated soil and debris were removed from Virublennoi Island during the 2018 RA activities. A total of 361 tons of lead contaminated soil was removed from Nevski Island West Dump, Reshimosti Island Dump #2, Sasedni Island Earthen Pit, and outside Makhnati Island Ammunition Magazine #1. At the Virublennoi Landfill, 5,720 tons of contaminated soil, 133 tons of steel debris, and 168 pounds of broken lead-acid battery plates were removed. Excavated soil was contained, characterized as either hazardous or non-hazardous, and disposed off-site based on characterization. Lead-acid battery plates were removed and disposed off-site and scrap steel debris was recycled.



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Post-excavation confirmation sampling results confirmed that no contaminants remain above the applicable cleanup levels at the following areas: Nevski West Dump; Reshimosti Metal Dump # 2; Sasedni Island Earthen Pit; Makhnati Island Ammunition Magazine #1 – area outside the magazine; Makhnati Island Southeast Vault; and the upland area of Virublennoi Landfill. Based on these confirmation sample results, environmental cleanup work is now complete at those areas. Additional work is currently underway within the intertidal area of the former Virublennoi Island landfill, as described below. In addition, future project work is planned to address remaining impacts in the concrete floor inside Makhnati Magazine # 1.

## Former Virublennoi Island Landfill - Intertidal Area Environmental Investigation

The upland area landfill contents of the Virublennoi Landfill was removed in 2018. Following landfill removal, confirmation soil sample results indicated residual contamination along the western boundary of the landfill removal area, within the intertidal area. A Site Inspection (SI) environmental investigation is currently underway to sample intertidal area pore water and sediment to determine if the intertidal area has been impacted by contaminants associated with the former landfill. During the summer of 2024, pore water and sediment samples were collected in the intertidal area for laboratory analysis of potential contaminants of concern. Reporting of the results will be completed in 2025. The next steps and path forward for this intertidal project will depend on the SI results. If results confirm that contaminant impacts are present within the intertidal area, then further investigation and an assessment of risk will be completed.



## Fort Rouseau Location

### Contact Information

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