

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING  
BENICIA ARSENAL UPDATE  
City Council Chambers  
April 23, 2012  
4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

- A. PURPOSE OF MEETING: Council Member Schwartzman – 5 minutes  
To update the Arsenal stakeholders about the progress made so far.
- B. INTRODUCTION: Mayor Patterson – 5 minutes
  - a. City Introductions
  - b. Review Rules
  - c. Self Introductions
- C. DEPARTMENT OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL LETTER: Mark O'Brien – 20 minutes
  - a. Reduced Area of Concern
- D. PROPOSED WORK SHOPS
- E. Next Meeting – July?

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**Stakeholder Participation Ground Rules:**

1. Please turn off your cell phone or set it to vibrate.
2. Wait to be recognized by the facilitator – Do not interrupt other speakers.
3. Respect all ideas and opinions – Avoid editorials or jokes at someone else's expense.
4. Focus on the goals and not the solutions or personal intentions. We are still at the information gathering stage and cannot draw conclusions/solutions until we have more information.

# The Benicia Herald

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## **Agency: Endangerment order for entire Arsenal 'will not happen'**

*By Donna Beth Weilenman  
Staff Reporter*

"An Arsenal-wide order will not happen," a state official told owners of Benicia Arsenal properties Thursday afternoon, allaying the fears of many.

The words of Charlie Ridenour, performance manager for the Department of Toxic Substances Control, were a relief to those who have worried the department might issue an Imminent and Substantial Endangerment Order for the historic district.

Such an order could have meant no new development would be allowed in the district until it was cleaned of leftover toxicity from its days as an Army facility, which ended in 1964. And that would have meant plummeting property values, among other difficulties.

When property owners last heard from Ridenour in a similar public meeting in November, they repeatedly asked him and Assistant Deputy Director Raymond Leclerc for guidelines to determine if their land and businesses could be excluded from investigation and cleanup of any possible contaminants left by the Army. At that time, the men had few answers.

But on Thursday came the first message that the state was concerned about just a few sites. "There will not be an Arsenal-wide order," Ridenour repeated.

In fact, if the Army didn't specify a site as having been used for potentially contaminating activities, the current owner shouldn't have any worries, he said.

"It's a good start, and much better than the last meeting," said Jack Bell, president of Suba Manufacturing. Saying DTSC had done its homework, he said, "I'm very satisfied."

"I thought it was largely good news. I'm cautiously optimistic," said Dana Dean, attorney for AMPORTS, which operates the Port of Benicia in the Arsenal. "It's a complex issue, and I thought they addressed the top layers."

"It seems to be good news," said Ed Ruszel of Ruszel Woodworks.

The DTSC is using a 2005 expanded site inspection report made for the Army Corps of Engineers in looking at the Arsenal. While the department doesn't concur with the report, "if the report says there are no issues, we don't look for issues," Ridenour said.

That report breaks the Arsenal into five areas: an explosives holding area, magazine storage, warehouse, motorpool and historic ordnance storage, and the industrial-manufacturing area.

North of Valero are burn cages where old ordnance was destroyed. Some of those cages were tested for lead, but none was found.

In general, Ridenour said, if a sought-for contaminant wasn't found, the Army didn't test for anything else because "the Corps reports show it's not their problem."

Likewise, unless a complaint was filed, "if the DTSC doesn't have a reason to look, it won't look. As far as we know, there are no issues," he said.

The Valero area contains a former firing range target berm, he said, that has been sieved for bullets. According to the report, "there's no leaching problem ... no contamination" — nor does there appear to be any exposure issues west of East Second Street, he said.

Ridenour said significant groundwater contamination, which might lead to soil vapor contamination, has been found at 4186 Park Road, an industrial warehouse site, and on Valero property. But the San Francisco Bay Area Regional Water Quality Control Board, rather than DTSC, would be the lead agency for addressing that contamination. "I don't see anything for us," he said.

The magazine storage area contains the post dump, a popping pot used to blow up bullets, a heavy equipment yard and a salvage yard. He said low levels of gasoline and diesel have been found east of Interstate 680. But any chemical plumes are not likely to enter the Suisun Bay or Carquinez Strait because the compacted fine particles of bay mud would block them, Ridenour said.

There were "ordnance issues" found north of I-780 and west of I-680 in the vicinity of the Benicia Historical Museum. "We don't see chemical contamination, but be careful digging," he said.

Ridenour explained that DTSC is reviewing data and ownership records to see whether enforcement orders are necessary, or whether any concerns could be handled in other ways, particularly through restrictions on land use.

In those cases, he said, a property owner might acquire a covenant that prevents residential development on a site but would allow other uses, such as commercial or industrial, that are not impacted by a particular level of chemical contamination, such as dichloroethylene, trichloroethene and vinyl chloride.

Mayor Elizabeth Patterson said the city would assist residents in applying to DTSC for covenants, to assure property owners use the right wording. Ridenour assured property owners that if they are able to remediate their properties, any restrictions on land uses could be lifted. And his agency wouldn't require a covenant on a piece of property if there was no reason to seek one.

Another area of concern is north of Bayshore Road in the vicinity of Tyler Street, Grant Street and Military East.

Any munitions and “explosives of concern” contamination there is the responsibility of the Army, Ridenour said. “It’s not the property owner’s fault if the Army left mortars or 57 mm shells inside the property.” But the Department of Defense is focused on more seriously contaminated sites, he told his Benicia audience. At San Luis Obispo, for example, grenades and other weapons have been found near ballfields.

The DTSC probably wouldn’t go as far as Patterson’s hopes that all 2,800 acres of the Arsenal be removed from the Cortese List, or DTSC’s areas of concern. “The ideal is to get all the properties off the list,” she said, because flagged properties can be seen as less desirable for purchase or financing.

More likely, Ridenour said, is that only specific areas with known contamination would be flagged, minimizing what’s on the list.

Ridenour said the expanded site inspection report isn’t on the DTSC website ([www.dtsc.ca.gov](http://www.dtsc.ca.gov)) yet, so it hasn’t been readily available for residents or property owners to read. But he said Thursday it would be available online soon.

Even if she doesn’t get a complete exclusion of the Arsenal from the Cortese List, Patterson said, “It’s gotten to the point that the entire site is not under a cloud.” While a few parts of the district remain “challenged,” she said Thursday’s meeting marked “a clear path to a solution.

“It’s been a stressful time, a threat to the Industrial Park and our economic engine,” she said, and she was pleased to hear that DTSC was willing to consider a “voluntary way to address this.”

Written by beniciaherald  
January 15, 2012 at 5:11 am

## **Benicia Arsenal cleanup could be quicker than first thought**

Times-Herald (Vallejo, CA) - Saturday, January 14, 2012

Author: Tony Burchyns / Times-Herald

BENICIA -- City leaders expressed relief this week after hearing that the Arsenal cleanup could go quicker than originally expected.

State environmental regulators said there is no need to place a cleanup order on the entire 28,000-acre former defense site. They further said that environmental risks from chemicals or unexploded ordnance affect just a handful of properties.

California Department of Toxic Substances Control performance manager Charlie Ridenour shared the news with city officials property owners during a workshop Thursday at City Hall.

"This is hugely important," Benicia Mayor Elizabeth Patterson said afterward. "It takes the cloud off the whole Arsenal."

Stretching along the Carquinez Strait on the city's southeastern edge, the once-strategic site housed California's first Army weapons depot. It was later used for small arms manufacturing.

When it was decommissioned in 1964, the property was split up and transferred to private interests. It's now an industrial park that drives the local economy.

The Army claims it has met its cleanup responsibilities. But plans for more commercial buildings and housing have spurred renewed interest in ensuring that the former base is free of harmful contaminants from past military use.

As recently as September city officials were concerned that a cleanup order against the Army would prompt the Defense Department to name private property owners and the city as other responsible parties. But state officials say they've refined their concerns to a small portion of the lower Arsenal, which Patterson said was good news for most property owners.

A proposed lower Arsenal housing plan, however, will continue to be stalled until the city has a road map for dealing with challenged properties. While many properties will be removed from the cleanup, others may have restrictions -- such as no housing -- placed on them.

But it should be business as usual for most industrial park businesses, some of which have had hardships getting financing due to the cleanup uncertainties, Patterson said.

"Now (the state's concerns) are much more refined so the bulk of the Arsenal is not under this cloud ... and there are solutions for those properties that may have some problems," she said.

City officials renewed their promise to help property owners get funding for cleanup costs exceeding what the Army will pay. Negotiations involving the state, city and defense officials

are ongoing.

"Some property owners have deeper pockets than others," Patterson said. "It is our interest to make sure we have new jobs coming in ... and we can't do that until we get these properties cleaned up."

Contact staff writer Tony Burchyns at [tburchyns@timesherald.com](mailto:tburchyns@timesherald.com) or (707) 553-6831.