

Questions:

1. When will the investigation begin?
2. What will be the scope of the investigation and more specifically, what waterways and areas will be targeted outside the base?
3. Why is expected to take 12 months?
4. What map of the boundaries of the investigation can Defence provide?
5. Who will be conducting the investigation?
6. What consultation has the department had with the State government and Townsville City Council in relation to conducting the investigation?

Response:

Defence expects to be in contract with a Lead Consultant and Third Party Reviewer by March 2017 which will allow the Detailed Environmental Investigation in and around RAAF Base Townsville. This comprehensive investigation will take approximately 12 months to complete as it will be carried out in accordance with the National Environmental Protection (Assessment of Contaminated Sites) Measure (NEPM) framework.

Considerable effort will be undertaken to carry out this investigation including the collection and analysis of hundreds of samples including soil, water, sediment and flora and fauna as well, as completing modeling of the hydrology of the site.

Specifically, this investigation, will include:

- Reviewing the historical use, storage and management of legacy AFFF to identify sources;
- Sampling soil, surface water and groundwater on and off the base to identify the potential for exposure to PFAS in the vicinity;
- Targeted investigation of soil and groundwater in on-site areas where firefighting foams were used;
- broad soil sampling across the wider base areas;
- investigation of sediment and surface water in drainage lines on-base and extending off-base;
- collection of surface water and sediment from key human health and ecological receptor locations; and
- A Human Health Risk Assessment and Ecological Risk Assessment, if required. These assessments will identify the nature and extent of potential contamination, evaluate any potential risks to the population and ecology, and inform future action to mitigate risks

The investigation will cover an area that is determined to be potentially impacted by PFAS based upon historical use of aqueous film forming foam and surface and ground water flow. This area will be identified by expert consultants following initial assessment of the site.

Defence's expert consultant will ensure that all samples taken are tested in laboratories accredited by the National Association of Test Authorities and that all investigation reports will be reviewed by a Third Party Reviewer.

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Defence continues to be committed to engaging with the local community throughout this investigation. Dates for community walk-in sessions are currently being finalised for RAAF Base Townsville and are anticipated for March 2017. Advertising for these community engagement sessions will be available through local print media and published online at the PFAS website.

Defence provided the Preliminary Sampling Program report to the Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet, Townsville Council and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for review and consultation prior to the release of the report on 8 November 2016. Defence officials met with representatives of the Townsville Council on 29 November 2016 to discuss planning for the environmental investigation. Defence will continue to engage with Local, State and Federal Government authorities during the planning for, and conduct of the detailed environmental investigation.

Further information regarding the investigation at RAAF Base Townsville can be found at: <http://www.defence.gov.au/id/PFOSPFOA/DefenceSitesPending.asp>

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