

THE PRESIDIO


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FEATURED PROJECTS: REMEDIATION TO RESTORATION

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When the Presidio was a military post, the Army disposed of waste at 15 landfills sites. These range in size from one to five acres and contain primarily building debris and fill soils. The landfills sometimes contain metals (such as lead), pesticides, or other chemicals. The Presidio Trust is now removing some of these landfills and restoring the sites as native plant areas or forest groves. The Presidio Trust is also removing several petroleum sites, typically where the Army once housed large petroleum storage tanks, pipelines, or vehicle repair areas. The following describes “remediation to restoration” projects now underway or coming soon.

FEATURED PROJECT: BAKER BEACH LANDFILL REMOVAL

Until the 1950s, the Army regularly disposed of debris by dumping it over the Presidio’s coastal bluffs. In the last eight years, the Trust has removed five major landfills, but no remediation project has been more complex and dramatic than the effort to clean up the bluffs above Baker Beach.

Between August and November of 2007, 73,000 tons of debris were unearthed by spider excavators and conveyed 250 feet along treacherous slopes to the top of the cliffs. The operation was conducted 12 hours a day, six days a week. Objects of interest always surface during excavations: dog tags, mess kits, even horseshoes. The “stop everything” finds, however, are unexploded ordnance. In the course of the Baker Beach excavation, Civil War-era ordnance were found – two 8-inch cannon balls and two 8-inch armor-piercing shells designed for the Rodman Rifle. All were exploded in place. The nearby Coastal Trail will soon be restored, complementing the beautiful *Batteries and Bluffs* trail completed this fall by the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and the National Park Service. A scenic overlook with views of the Golden Gate Bridge from the bluffs will create a “sense of arrival” at a new park entrance.



OTHER RESTORATION SUCCESSES

Thompson Reach (formerly Fill Site 6A at the Main Post)

In summer 2005, the Presidio Trust removed a landfill north of Lincoln Boulevard near Halleck Street (across from the Presidio Fire Station) that once contained building debris from the 1975 demolition of the original Letterman Army Medical Center. In fall 2005, a 400 foot segment of the Tennessee Hollow creek system that was formerly buried in a



storm drain below the fill site was restored.

Currently, about 30,000 plants grown in the Presidio Native Plant Nursery are being

planted to beautify the area, prevent erosion, and stabilize the soil. Much of this work is done with volunteers from the Presidio Park Stewards program. To volunteer, please call (415) 561-4449 or email nature@presidiotrust.gov. The Trust also installed a trail and landscaped area along nearby Girard Road in late 2006.



Coyote Gultch (former Baker Beach Bluffs Landfills)

In 2004 and 2005, the Trust removed a landfill from a three-acre site on the Baker Beach Bluffs (on the west side of Lincoln Boulevard near Battery Crosby). The Army created the landfill between the 1930s and 1960s by dumping waste soil, household waste, and building rubble into a coastal ravine. In early 2006, the Trust completed restoration of an historic access road to nearby Battery Crosby. Native dune vegetation is being planted by National Park Service staff and volunteers. A wetland feature has developed in the bottom of the



natural ravine that was re-exposed after the landfill was removed. The site will be closely monitored for three years. In a photo below, a young red fox visits the work site. A coyote is also known to visit the site on a regular basis.

Sunset Scrub (formerly Fill Site 5)

Sunset Scrub is located on Washington Blvd just uphill from the World War II Memorial. The Army deposited waste soil and building debris on this site for 50 years ending in the late 1970s. Once the landfill was removed, approximately 2.7 acres of native soil was exposed. Staff and volunteers then planted 30,000 native plants, representing more than 100 species. A study is underway to examine the process of natural restoration after excavation. A California quail, a resident coyote, a snake, and two rare plant species have all been sighted at Sunset Scrub.



Historic Forest near Rob Hill Campground (formerly Landfill 4)

In 2003, the Presidio Trust removed debris from a site at the former Army Central Magazine facility near Rob Hill Campground. Landfill 4 is being restored as part of the Presidio's historic forest. The effort has three goals: to retain the forest's historic character, to test replacements for blue gum eucalyptus that are slower-growing and less invasive but similar looking, and to develop methods for diversifying the understory of the eucalyptus woodland. More than 150 trees have been planted and are now thriving.

