



SDMS DocID 465551

Fort Devens  
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# Environmental News

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For Immediate release: October 13, 1998

Release#98-10-9

## **EPA Extends Ayer Citizens' Group Grant Award by \$25,000 to Continue Citizen Participation in Fort Devens Cleanup**

BOSTON -- The Environmental Protection Agency recently awarded a \$25,000 grant to the People of Ayer Concerned about the Environment (PACE) to oversee cleanup activities at the former Fort Devens Superfund Site.

This technical assistance grant award, an extension of a previously awarded grant to PACE in 1997, will enable the group to continue its involvement in the U.S. Army's base-wide cleanup and long-term monitoring plans. Currently, PACE is working with the community, EPA, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and the Army to reach a mutually acceptable solution for addressing several debris landfills on Devens property.

"Throughout the past year, the People of Ayer Concerned about the Environment has played a critical role in contributing independent expertise and community input into the cleanup process," said John P. DeVillars, administrator of the EPA's New England office. "PACE's work is proof positive that enabling community involvement in Superfund Site cleanups ensures that the decision making stays on a winning course. We consider this money well spent."

U.S. Representative Marty Meehan said, "PACE has worked hard over the last year to educate its neighbors about the environmental concerns related to the cleanup of the former Fort Devens military base. I am pleased that the EPA has renewed PACE's funding and that the group will have the continued opportunity to provide technical assistance to residents as the cleanup process proceeds. I look forward to continuing our work together."

Ayer community leaders formed PACE in 1994 to address mounting concerns about cleanup work at the 10,000-acre base. With this technical assistance grant award, totaling \$75,000, that the group will have received a total of \$75,000 from the EPA to facilitate its participation in decision making in the superfund cleanup.

In 1989, Fort Devens was placed on the Superfund National Priorities List, a roster of the worst hazardous waste sites in the nation. The Army, responsible for conducting and funding all cleanup work at the former base, identified a total of 324 sites for investigation of potential environmental problems. Much of the cleanup has been completed and the Army has spent more than \$60 million on cleanup activities. The 26 remaining sites under active cleanup and investigation include 14 where cleanup decisions have been finalized. PACE is actively involved in reviewing data from ongoing investigations associated with several of the 12 remaining areas including the seven (7) landfills, the former air field, and the former elementary school.

The technical assistance grant program was established in 1986 as part of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act . The grant provides concerned citizens the opportunity to hire independent technical experts - such as toxicologists, chemists, biologists, and engineers - to help them interpret complex technical information related to cleanup work at federal Superfund sites.

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