

PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Completes Remedial Action Recovery of WWII Munitions in the Upland Land Area and Inland Waters of Cape Poge Bay as Well As the Recovery of a WWII Military Aircraft in Cape Poge Bay, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts; with Additional Work Remaining at Tisbury Great Pond, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District with assistance from the U. S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville (CEHNC), and their contractor GSI Pacific, Inc., completed the remedial action for the removal of munitions on land and in the inland waters at Cape Poge Bay, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts in June 2019. The munitions removal projects were conducted in the interest of public safety.

The field work at Cape Poge began in March 2016 and involved performing biological surveys, vegetation removal, geophysical surveys, and the removal of WWII munitions (MK-23s). Work was completed as of June 2019. Items found during the Remedial Action at Cape Poge from March 2016 to June 2019 included the following:

Land:

Anomalies Dug: 19,147

Munitions and Explosives of Concern (MEC) removed: 2,061

Munitions Debris (MD) removed: 19,842

Inland Water of Cape Poge Bay:

Anomalies Dug: 8,605

Munitions and Explosives of Concern (MEC) removed: 1,774

Munitions Debris (MD) removed: 133

WWII Military Aircraft recovered: 1

A total of 194 demolition events using explosives were performed to destroy MEC items.

In some cases, multiple items were recovered at a single anomaly location.

During the remedial action for munitions, remnants of a World War II (WWII) era Naval Aircraft were also recovered from the waters of Cape Poge Bay. The Curtiss SB2C-4E Helldiver was an inadvertent archaeological find that was addressed as an unanticipated discovery under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The site also fell under the jurisdiction of the Sunken Military Craft Act of 2004, which states the U.S. Navy's sunken craft cannot be disturbed without permission from the U.S. Navy. Recovery of the aircraft took place in May through June 2019 in coordination with the Naval History and Heritage Command's Underwater Archaeology Branch, using divers and a barge in Cape Poge Bay. A total of 1,312 aircraft artifacts were recovered, including three propeller blades and two Browning .30 caliber Machine Guns. Of the total number of aircraft artifacts recovered, 208 were shipped to Texas A&M Conservation Research Laboratory. Of those, 96 artifacts were slated for conservation,

109 were to be x-rayed and evaluated for historical significance and possible conservation and 3 were designated for research. Once completed, all conserved artifacts will be curated at the Naval History and Heritage Command and available for loan to museums. Also recovered was a dash mounted compass containing radium which was disposed of as low level radioactive waste through a licensed waste disposal facility. The remainder of the aircraft artifacts were deemed insignificant fragmentary debris that were documented and recorded by archaeologists as part of the section 106 process and shredded as scrap metal.

A map of Cape Poge showing the areal coverage and munition items found is attached. A brief powerpoint presentation of the aircraft recovery is also attached.

In addition to the Remedial Action at Cape Poge, the Tisbury Great Pond (TGP) Remedial Action project was initiated in April of 2017 and similar to Cape Poge it involved biological surveys, vegetation removal, geophysical surveys and the removal of WWII munitions. The areas of TGP included removal of munitions on land, inland waters (both Tisbury Great Pond and Long Cove Ponds), the dune, beach and ocean. The upland and inland water work in the ponds began April 2017. The Remedial Action work on the dune, which included taking down and rebuilding 700 feet of dune was performed from September to December 2017. Additional work remains to be done at TGP including geophysical surveys clearing a 100 foot buffer around 5 locations where MEC items were previously removed in the ocean. Additional remedial action may also occur further to the west on the ocean side of the barrier beach where “cuts” have been historically made in the beach by the Town Sewers to drain Tisbury Great Pond. The clearance of the 100 foot buffer around the five locations was not completed in 2019 due to severe beach erosion resulting in insufficient space on the beach for equipment to support offshore diving operations. The additional remedial action on the ocean side of the remainder of the barrier beach where historical cuts have been made has not begun due to Right of Entry issues. Further work at TGP may be conducted either in the Spring or Fall of 2020 pending access issues. Items found during the remedial action at Tisbury Great Pond from April 2017 to December 2018 included the following:

Land, Inland Water and Ocean:

Anomalies Dug: 5,134

MEC Items (Munitions and Explosives of Concern) removed: 285

MD Items (Munitions Debris) removed: 295

A total of 14 demolition events using explosives were performed to destroy MEC items.

A map of Tisbury Great Pond showing the areal coverage and munition items found is attached.

Annual Long Term Monitoring/Land Use Controls are being performed at both sites, following the remedial actions. Monitoring includes evaluating the re-establishment of all vegetation, the stability of the rebuilt dune at TGP, annual ordnance training for local rangers and first responders, inspection and repair of signage, and tracking of munition responses by the Explosive Ordnance Detachment (EOD) and/or the State Bomb Squad.

Annual reports will be completed for each monitoring event. At the culmination of 5 years from the start of the remedial actions, a Five Year Review will be performed to determine if the remedial actions that were conducted are still protective of human health and the environment.

Further information regarding both of the above projects can be obtained by visiting the Corps website by clicking on the following link: www.nae.usace.army.mil

Once on the website, under Missions, click on Projects/Topics, then Massachusetts, then Martha's Vineyard to view the project page, project photos, and geophysical surveys.

The Remedial Investigations, Feasibility Studies, Proposed Plans and Decision Documents for both Cape Poge and Tisbury Great Pond are available on the Corps Website. The Remedial Action Reports will be developed over the next 6 to 9 months and will be posted when finalized. Any additional information or concerns may also be sent to the Corps Project Manager, Ms. Carol Ann Charette, at 978-318-8605 (office) or 978-505-2918 (cell) or via email at carol.a.charette@usace.army.mil.

The public is reminded that due to rapid coastal erosion, munition items may continue to be found. These items should not be touched or thought of as inert or not of a concern, despite past experiences. Items should not be taken home, and if anyone has munition items in their home, they should call the local police department (911) to have a munitions trained individual come to their home to inspect the item to determine if it contains any explosive material, and remove it safely, if necessary.