

**El Toro Marine Corps Air Station  
El Toro, California  
Region 9  
CA6170023208**

**Site Exposure Potential**

The El Toro Marine Corps Air Station is located on 1,900 hectares in a primarily urban area of El Toro, Orange County, California (Figure 1). The station was commissioned in 1943 to support the Fleet Marine Forces in the Pacific Ocean. Twenty-one problem areas have been identified at the site, including three landfills containing both hazardous and solid waste; buried drums of explosives and low-level radioactive waste; and areas where PCBs, battery acids, leaded fuels, and other hazardous substances were dumped or spilled. In 1983, the Orange County Water District detected trichloroethylene (TCE) and tetrachloroethylene (TCA) in shallow irrigation wells both on-site and downgradient of the site (EPA 1987).

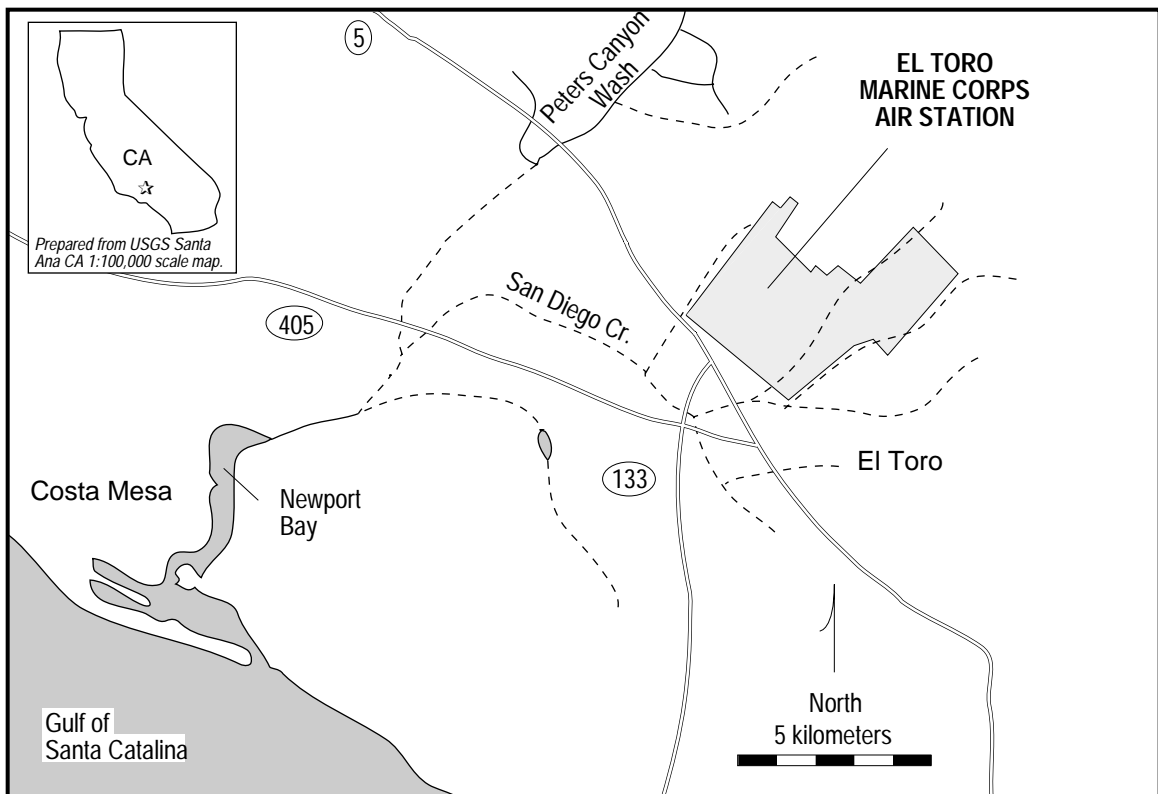


Figure 1. The Marine Corps Air Station site in El Toro, California.

Three intermittent streams flow either through or adjacent to the El Toro site. Two flow along the border of the facility, with the third passing through the center of the site. All three streams flow into San Diego Creek southwest of the site, with San Diego Creek flowing into Newport Bay 14 km from the site. San Diego Creek was originally an intermittent stream, but is now a continuously flowing, low-gradient stream due to surface water runoff from development in the watershed (St. Amant 1989). Newport Bay empties into the Gulf of Santa Catalina.

While there is insufficient information on overall contaminant pathways to NOAA trust resources, it is likely that both surface water runoff and groundwater flow to Newport Bay are possible pathways of concern.

**Site-Related Contaminants**

Contaminants of concern to NOAA include PCBs and trace metals. There is little data on contaminants and their respective concentrations on the El Toro site. Contaminants believed to be on-site include PCBs, lead, chloroform, TCA, and TCE. TCE was detected in on-site wells, but concentration levels were not presented in the documents available for review (EPA 1987).

**NOAA Trust Habitats and Species in Site Vicinity**

There are no known NOAA trust resources in the creeks near the El Toro site (St. Amant 1989). The closest habitat of interest is the Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve, 14 km downstream from the site. This area is of special interest and is undergoing habitat restoration by the California Department of Fish and Game. Wetlands in the Upper Newport Bay area are used by NOAA trust resources as nursery and spawning grounds (Table 1) (Gregory 1989).

Table 1. Selected NOAA trust resource use of Newport Bay (USFWS 1981).

Species	Spawning Area	Nursery Area	Adult Area
anchovy		X	X
California halibut		X	X
spotted sand bass	X	X	X
striped mullet		X	X
top smelt	X	X	X
white sea bass		X	X

Three areas along the coast just south of Newport Bay have been designated by the State as "Areas of Special Biological Significance" that support either wetlands or intertidal areas: Newport Beach Marine Life Refuge, Irvine Coast Marine Life Refuge, and Heisler Park Ecological Reserve.

**Response Category:** Federal Facility

**Current Stage of Site Action:** Not Determined

**EPA Site Manager**

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**NOAA Coastal Resource Coordinator**

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## References

EPA. 1987. HRS Scoring Package. El Toro Marine Corps Air Station. El Toro, CA. San Francisco: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9.

Gregory, P., Fisheries Biologist, California Department of Fish and Game, Long Beach, California, personal communications, January 25, 1989; March 14, 1989.

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USFWS. 1981. Pacific coast ecological inventory: Santa Ana, California. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1:250,000 scale map. 33116-A1-EI-250.