RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD RULE

Handbook

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR

FEBRUARY 2026

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 2

THE RAB RULE 3

SECTION 1: RAB OVERVIEW 4

SECTION 2: ESTABLISHING A RAB 7

SECTION 3: RAB ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES 12

SECTION 4: RAB OPERATIONS 17

SECTION 5: ADJOURNING, DISSOLVING, AND REESTABLISHING A RAB 22

SECTION 6: BEST PRACTICES 26

GLOSSARY 32

ACRONYMS 35

INDEX OF HANDBOOK SUB-SECTIONS 36

FIGURES

FIGURE 1. RAB PROCESS 4

FIGURE 2. RAB PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR GENERAL ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES 12

FIGURE 3. RAB OPERATING PROCEDURES 17

FIGURE 4. HOW THE TAPP PROGRAM CAN SUPPORT RABS 21

FIGURE 5. HOW DOW SUPPORTS RABS UNDER DIFFERENT INSTALLATION CLOSURE CIRCUMSTANCES 24

Introduction

Since 1994, Restoration Advisory Boards (RABs) have served as valuable forums for sharing information and uniting War Department (DoW) personnel, stakeholders, and community members in a common purpose to support cleanup at DoW sites. By increasing communication, collaboration, and transparency among stakeholders involved in the Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP), active RABs can achieve positive outcomes. RAB members work together to facilitate an integrated and responsive installation cleanup strategy. They also bring together Department personnel, community members, and other stakeholders to share knowledge and feedback regarding an installation's "environmental restoration"—referred to as "cleanup" in this document—milestones, timeframes, challenges, and goals.

Effective RABs are comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders ranging from DoW representatives and technical experts to local community members, government agency personnel, regulatory partners, and tribal community members and indigenous peoples[1] who collectively identify issues, engage in meaningful discussions, and exchange information throughout the cleanup process. Stakeholders with different technical, environmental, cultural, historical, and organizational backgrounds bring a range of experience and expertise which enhances the efficacy of RABs. Moreover, stakeholders that work together to identify, understand, and address concerns regarding cleanup develop a common understanding of the cleanup process, which can contribute to a project's efficiency, effectiveness, and timeliness.

The RAB Rule Handbook was initially published in 2007 to accompany and supplement the RAB Rule issued on May 12, 2006 (more on page 3). The 2026 version retains the original principles of the 2007 edition and amplifies the Department's focus on community engagement throughout the cleanup process. This updated Handbook includes information on the scope, characteristics, composition, funding, establishment, operation, adjournment, and dissolution of RABs. It also includes a new section highlighting best practices for planning, coordinating, and executing RABs.

Everyone involved in a RAB is encouraged to apply the lessons learned in this Handbook to facilitate active participation, strengthen community support, and increase understanding of DoW's decisions during cleanups.

For definitions and additional context regarding terms used throughout the Handbook, please reference the **Glossary**. Note that terms that appear in the **Glossary** are ***bolded and italicized*** on their first use in the text starting on page 3. Additionally, blue callout textboxes are used throughout the Handbook to highlight examples and provide more context on important terms, programs, and concepts.

1 Indigenous peoples includes Native Hawaiian Organizations (NHOs). DoW is required to engage with NHOs per DoDI 4710.03, *Consultation Policy with Native Hawaiian Organizations*.

The RAB Rule

RABs are important to the Department for several reasons. RAB activities can help strengthen relationships with ***stakeholders***, facilitate information sharing, and ensure collaboration with neighboring communities that may be impacted during or have an interest in the cleanup process. Additionally, the RAB Rule codified at 32 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 202 was issued in May 2006 and requires DoW to establish, whenever possible and practical, a committee to review and comment on Department actions and proposed actions regarding cleanup. It details specific requirements for RABs and guides DoW's RAB activities, including the rules and processes for establishing RABs to ensure they successfully facilitate community involvement, encourage engagement, and foster transparency regarding actions taken during cleanups. Existing laws and regulations, and DoW policy and guidance, enable the establishment and operation of successful RABs. Title 10 U.S. Code (U.S.C.) Section 2705 is the Federal statute authorizing DoW to establish RABs. DoD Instruction (DoDI) 4715.07, ***Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP)***, outlines Department cleanup policies, and DoD Manual 4715.20, *DERP Management*, provides guidance for executing these policies.

WHAT IS DERP?

DERP is the Defense Environmental Restoration Program and is the Department's overarching program for conducting cleanup at active ***installations, Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS)***, and ***Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) locations***.

RABs enhance community outreach and participation activities required by law, regulation, or policy. DoW must also fulfill public involvement requirements including those in the ***Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)*** and the ***Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)***.

Section 1: RAB Overview

A RAB is a group of stakeholders that meet regularly to exchange information and discuss cleanup at DERP-eligible sites. RABs are led by two co-chairs, one installation representative and one community representative, who are responsible for directing and managing RAB operations. RAB members should live and work in the affected community, or be affected by the installation's cleanup activities, and collectively represent a cross-section of the community's organizations, population, and interests. RABs are formed and operated via the process shown in Figure 1.

RAB PROCESS:

1. EVALUATE

Assess interest in a RAB.

If needed, prepare for and announce RAB.

If not needed, reassess at least every 24 months.

2. PLAN

Engage the community.

Select members.

Establish mission statement and operating procedures.

3. OPERATE

Meet regularly.

Solicit community input on cleanup activities.

4. ADJOURN*

Determine if adjournment is appropriate.

Notify members and the public.

* *Or dissolve.*

5. REESTABLISH

Reassess interest at least every 24 months.

Reestablish due to interest or new or ongoing cleanup activities.

DoW installations are responsible for leading, managing, and ensuring completion of all steps in the RAB process.

Figure 1. RAB Process

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION (ALSO KNOWN AS "CLEANUP")?

Environmental restoration includes the identification, investigation, research and development, and cleanup of contamination from hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants, including munitions and explosives of concern. This handbook refers to environmental restoration as "cleanup."

RABs are advisory bodies that offer focused, interactive, and meaningful opportunities for public involvement in the cleanup process by:

- Reviewing and commenting on cleanup progress, documents, and activities;
- Sharing questions, concerns, and ideas;
- Serving as a liaison with the larger community by sharing information about ***cleanup activities*** between the community and the RAB; and
- Exchanging information and providing comments regarding the schedule, type, and status of cleanup activities.

RABs are important because they enable the Department to build stronger relationships with surrounding communities and ensure stakeholders understand DoW's cleanup processes and ongoing work in their communities. DoW recommends an installation begin the steps to determine if there is sufficient and sustained community interest in establishing a RAB as soon as possible following the determination that it will conduct cleanup activities under DERP.

A VOICE FOR THE COMMUNITY

While RABs are not decision-making bodies, they are a vital part of the cleanup process. DoW listens closely to a RAB's insights and considers their input when making cleanup decisions. RABs also help to build connections and greater trust among community and installation stakeholders, which can have long-term positive outcomes.

1.1 RAB Topics

RABs may only discuss issues pertaining to cleanup activities. Topics raised by the community that are outside of the RAB's purview (e.g., noise complaints) will be referred to appropriate installation offices or individuals by the RAB installation co-chair.

1.2 Required RAB Activities

Each RAB is required by the RAB Rule to take these steps to facilitate operations:

- Develop a mission statement and operating procedures with input from the community;
- Allow public participation and communication;
- Develop and distribute meeting minutes;
- Select a community co-chair and RAB members and replace them as necessary; and
- Update RAB information in the information repository which becomes part of the ***Administrative Record (AR)***.

Once RABs are established, members collaborate to develop unique operating procedures based on specific community and installation needs. Tailored operating procedures are necessary to guide the RAB's activities and ensure that it functions effectively.

With input from RAB members, the co-chairs develop a mission statement detailing the RAB's goals and describing its purpose.

1.3 Consensus Among RAB Members

DoW encourages all RAB members to share their unique perspectives, knowledge, and concerns. Consensus is not required for the recommendations and input that a RAB provides to an installation. It is critical to consider differing opinions, perspectives, and experiences so that the decision-making process includes the diverse interests of the community.

To facilitate the inclusion of diverse interests in the cleanup decision-making process, the Department works to obtain input on cleanup activities from as many stakeholders as possible and welcomes feedback, comments, and advice from these stakeholders even if they are not formally a member of the RAB. However, only community RAB members should vote or participate in a poll.

Section 2: Establishing a RAB

Installations are responsible for leading RAB establishment and operations wherever cleanup activities occur and the surrounding communities express interest. The timeline for establishing a RAB can vary and is specific to each installation depending on the time required to assess community interest.

If a community is not interested in establishing a RAB, then a RAB is not required. If a RAB is not established at the outset of cleanup activities, the Installation Commander or other designated decision authority—referred to as "Installation Commander" in this document—should assess community interest in a RAB every 24 months while cleanup activities are ongoing. If the community expresses significant and sustained interest, the Installation Commander should establish a RAB at that time. Reassessment is not necessary if cleanup decisions are final and remedies are in place and operating properly.

INSTALLATION COMMANDER DELEGATES RAB RESPONSIBILITIES

Sometimes the Installation Commander may opt to delegate responsibilities for operating the RAB to another installation leader. In these situations, the Installation Commander typically helps form the RAB, ensures Department personnel are communicating with the public via the RAB and other venues, and often attends portions of RAB meetings, other public forums, and stakeholder meetings. However, they delegate other responsibilities, including serving as the installation RAB co-chair, to another individual. This approach permits the Installation Commander to be engaged and present while not requiring them to execute all installation RAB co-chair functions.

2.1 Criteria for Establishing a RAB

The Installation Commander evaluates several criteria to determine if they should establish a RAB. A RAB should be established when there is sufficient and sustained community interest and any of the following criteria are met:

- The closure of an installation involves the transfer of property to the community or other Federal agency;
- At least 50 local citizens have petitioned for a RAB;
- Government or tribal representatives requested a RAB; or
- Installation determines the need for a RAB.

Individuals in small communities, rural areas, and less populated areas may demonstrate sustained interest in and request creation of a RAB even if they have fewer than 50 citizens petitioning.

The installation may still determine a need for establishing a RAB even if none of the other above criteria are met. This need can be determined by reviewing correspondence files, examining media coverage, consulting with the local community and relevant government officials, and evaluating the community's response to past communication efforts.

If the Installation Commander determines there is a need to establish a RAB, they will formally announce it and conduct public outreach. Outreach can include informing the community of the RAB's purpose and membership opportunities and hosting an initial introductory meeting to review RAB goals and procedures and invite community members to participate and serve on the RAB.

2.2 Community Interest in Establishing a RAB

When community members, tribal and government representatives, and other stakeholders are interested in cleanup activities at an installation that does not have a RAB, they should contact the installation cleanup point of contact (POC) or Public Affairs (PA) office to express their interest and petition to establish a RAB. Other ways for a community member to express interest in establishing a RAB include regularly communicating with appropriate Department personnel (e.g. PA office or staff familiar with the cleanup program) or responding to installation outreach.

FINDING THE INSTALLATION CLEANUP POC OR INFORMATION ABOUT A RAB

Depending upon the DoW Component or installation, the process for identifying the appropriate contact for cleanup information may vary. To find the right person to talk to, individuals should begin by contacting the installation's PA office or reviewing the installation's website for information on cleanup and to determine if the installation has an active RAB or intends to initiate a RAB.

While the Department encourages individual tribal members to participate on RABs, RABs in no way replace or serve as a substitute forum for the government-to-government relationship between DoW and Federally recognized tribes. The Installation Commander will honor government-to-government consultation outside of a RAB, as requested by a tribal government.

2.3 Installation Communication and Engagement with Communities

DoW recognizes that effective communication approaches vary based on community demographics and emphasizes the importance of understanding stakeholder interests. To prepare for establishing a RAB and ensure information reaches as many people in the affected community as possible, the Installation Commander or their Department designee should ensure the use of a combination of media—such as web, print, and social—to share information. Additionally, all installations with cleanup sites are required to have a ***Community Involvement Plan (CIP)*** [2], which identifies the stakeholders and most effective communication methods for their particular location. Common communication

2 Previously known as the Community Relations Plan (CRP).

methods for community outreach include fact sheets, press releases, public notices, public services announcements, and newspaper advertisements. Communication tools help the Installation Commander:

- Advertise the RAB, public meetings, or open houses;
- Inform the community of the RAB's purpose;
- Notify the community of RAB membership opportunities; and
- Discuss how the RAB relates to the installation's broader community involvement program.

Additionally, the Installation Commander may host a public forum, such as a meeting or open house, to introduce RAB concepts to the community, begin the process of inviting members to serve on the RAB, and provide community members with an opportunity to share input on topics they want to discuss in the RAB.

2.4 RAB Members

RABs can comprise many different stakeholders, including Department personnel, community members, ***regulatory agency*** partners, tribal community members and indigenous peoples, and local government representatives. At a minimum, each RAB should include representatives from DoW and the community and reflect the diverse interests within the local community throughout their operation.

2.5 Selecting RAB Members

The Installation Commander will identify who will serve as the RAB installation co-chair. In many instances, the RAB installation co-chair is the only DoW representative on the RAB, although other Department subject matter experts may attend meetings when necessary. Once the Installation Commander identifies the RAB installation co-chair, they will identify individuals to serve on a selection panel to nominate community members for the RAB.

The selection panel, which is made up of community members with varying backgrounds and interests, is responsible for evaluating and recommending community candidates for RAB membership to the Installation Commander. When convening the selection panel, the Installation Commander will consult with representatives from EPA and from tribal, State, and local governments as appropriate to ensure it is composed of community members with varying backgrounds and interests.

To ensure transparency and representation of diverse interests, the selection panel will establish procedures and criteria for reviewing, nominating, and selecting community members to serve on the RAB. To identify potential members, the selection panel should consult the installation's CIP to understand who may be interested in participating and the best way to reach them. The selection panel should also consider contacting the following groups to identify potential selection panel members: local water or planning boards, churches, the chamber of commerce, and community groups. DoW recommends that members of the selection panel not serve as RAB members.

The selection panel will send the list of nominees to the Installation Commander for appointment to the RAB. The Installation Commander, in consultation with EPA and State regulatory agencies as appropriate, will review the nominations to ensure the panel fairly represents the local community.

The Installation Commander may reject the entire slate, but they cannot reject certain individuals.

Once appointed, the community RAB members will select a community co-chair to lead the RAB with the installation co-chair. DoW and other government RAB members do not participate in this selection.

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE FOR RAB MEMBERSHIP

No cleanup or technical expertise is necessary for the community co-chair or RAB members. The selection panel will place greater emphasis on the experiences an individual brings to the RAB, and the individual's expressed commitment toward achieving the RAB's goals, than on the individual's technical expertise. For example, an individual's interest in the community and the environment, as well as their ability to dedicate time to the RAB, are more important. While training is not required, installations may provide an orientation to help explain cleanup processes and site-specific issues if determined to be beneficial. During orientation, the installation may share information about the RAB's purpose, responsibilities, and expectations with the goal of helping new RAB members understand installation-specific environmental and health issues such as chemicals of concern, cleanup processes, cleanup technology, and sampling protocols.

2.6 RAB Regulatory Members

At ***National Priorities List (NPL)*** sites, as the lead regulatory agency, EPA may provide at least one representative to participate in the RAB. Tribal, State, and local governments may also provide representatives.[3] At non-NPL sites, the State regulatory agency with responsibility for cleanup oversight at the installation may provide at least one representative to participate in the RAB.

NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST

The NPL contains EPA's list of the national priorities among the known or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants throughout the United States and its territories. Cleanup is conducted under CERCLA, and EPA is the lead environmental regulator. To check whether your community is near or installation includes an NPL site, review the list: https://www.epa.gov/superfund/national-priorities-list-npl-sites-site-name.

2.7 Number of Total RAB Members

The number of members participating on a RAB is unique to each installation. Factors influencing RAB size include community interest, population, and cleanup issues. To maintain a constructive dialogue, DoW suggests the RAB be no larger than 30 individuals but not so small that diverse interests are not adequately represented. A RAB member may represent more than one group or interest.

3 Each regulatory agency should designate a lead representative if there are multiple representatives from the same regulatory agency.

2.8 Adding and Selecting New Community RAB Members

Additional individuals may join an established RAB in accordance with a RAB's operating procedures. A RAB can elect to solicit new members when a current member steps down or following major changes to installation activities or the community. RABs should establish and document the procedures for adding new members if needed.

If a RAB member steps down, current RAB members may provide input into the selection criteria for a new member to ensure the RAB maintains diversity of perspectives.

Any individuals who are interested in participating on the RAB should contact the installation co-chair or other relevant cleanup POC (see "Finding the Installation Cleanup POC," page 8) and express their interest. This input helps the installation determine a RAB's composition.

2.9 Reassessing Community Interest When an Installation Does Not Establish a RAB

DoW recommends that the Installation Commander reevaluate establishing a RAB at least once every 24 months while cleanup activities are ongoing. However, if conditions at the installation change (e.g., new development, migration of contaminants off-installation), the Installation Commander may need to evaluate sooner. The Installation Commander must document the procedures and findings for each reassessment in a memorandum for inclusion in the information repository.

The public can submit a petition for establishing a RAB and regulatory agencies may recommend the installation review public interest or convene a RAB at any time. However, it is not necessary for the Installation Commander to reassess community interest in establishing a RAB once the final ***cleanup remedy*** has been selected and is in place and operating.

EVENTS THAT MAY PROMPT RAB REASSESSMENT

Events that may prompt DoW to reassess community interest in establishing a RAB might include the addition of ***munitions response sites***, the installation's placement on the NPL or BRAC list, new residential or commercial development, or the potential presence of emerging chemicals of concern.

Section 3: RAB Roles and Responsibilities

RAB participant roles and responsibilities are summarized below in Figure 2.

INSTALLATION COMMANDER
Oversee implementation of the installation's lead responsibility for forming and operating a RAB.

RAB

LEADERSHIP

INSTALLATION CO-CHAIR
Direct and manage RAB operations with the community co-chair.

COMMUNITY CO-CHAIR
Direct and manage RAB operations with the installation co-chair.

REQUIRED MEMBERS

COMMUNITY
Contribute diverse community interests, concerns, and perspectives. Attend RAB meetings to ask questions, share suggestions, and raise concerns.

OPTIONAL AND ENCOURAGED MEMBERS

LOCAL & STATE GOVERNMENT
Contribute information on local and state standards and regulations and help provide broad representation.

EPA
Contribute information on Federal environmental laws and regulations.

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT
Contribute information on tribal standards and regulations as applicable.

PUBLIC
Attend RAB meetings to ask questions, share suggestions, and raise concerns.

Figure 2. RAB Participants and their General Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities described in this section that are shown in plain text, not italicized, are required by regulation and DoW guidance. Italicized text reflects best practices that the Department has identified that can further support the RAB in advancing the cleanup and creating lasting, long-term solutions. In addition to the requirements below, all RAB members are expected to observe their RAB's rules and operating procedures.

3.1 Installation Commander

Form and oversee an installation's RAB.

- Establish a RAB when appropriate and periodically reevaluate community interest.
- Select the installation co-chair.
- Vet community members nominated for appointment to the RAB to ensure diverse community representation.
- Delegate responsibilities for operating the RAB to another installation leader, as appropriate.
- Coordinate with others on when and if the RAB should be adjourned, dissolved, or reestablished.
- *Ensure cleanup information is shared broadly with the community to maintain transparency.*
- *Acknowledge and understand RAB operating procedures.*
- *Work with the installation co-chair and community co-chair to develop the RAB's mission statement.*
- *Periodically participate in RAB meetings.*

3.2 Installation Co-Chair

Serve as the installation representative on the RAB by directing and managing RAB operations with the community co-chair.

- Attend all RAB meetings.
- Coordinate with the community co-chair to develop the RAB mission statement.
- Coordinate with the community co-chair to carry out established operating procedures.
- Prepare and publish timely RAB meeting announcements in a variety of places (e.g., bulletin boards in the community, social media, flyers) to reach interested stakeholders.
- Coordinate with the community co-chair to prepare and distribute meeting announcements and agendas.
- In coordination with the community co-chair, prepare and verify the accuracy of RAB meeting minutes.
- Support development of RAB goals and objectives in consultation with the RAB and in accordance with DoW Component guidance.
- *Ensure that DoW participates in the RAB in an open and constructive manner.*
- *Solicit RAB members' input on cleanup activities at the installation.*
- *Discuss environmental matters clearly and plainly to ensure that RAB members can understand the issues (e.g., avoid using technical jargon).*
- *Ensure RAB members have an opportunity to provide input to the discussion. RABs will be more effective when community members have the opportunity to provide input on the topics that they want to hear about and discuss in advance of the RAB meeting.*

- *Ensure consideration of community issues and concerns related to cleanup.*
- *Ensure RAB members receive copies of presentations and readable maps and that documents distributed to the RAB are written in plain language when possible.*
- *Ensure documents distributed to the RAB are also available to the public.*
- *Provide relevant policies and guidance documents to the RAB.*
- *Ensure that the RAB has adequate administrative support (e.g., meeting summaries, record keeping and managing, poster creation).*
- *Support community members during the Technical Assistance for Public Participation (TAPP) application process.*
- *Refer issues not related to cleanup to the PA office, who will then coordinate with the appropriate installation personnel.*
- *Ensure that RAB members receive relevant training when appropriate and necessary.*
- *Report RAB activities to the Installation Commander.*

3.3 Community Co-Chair

Represent community members on the RAB by directing and managing RAB operations with the installation co-chair.

- Voluntarily serve in this capacity on the RAB without compensation.
- Attend all meetings.
- Coordinate with the installation co-chair to develop the RAB mission statement.
- Coordinate with the installation co-chair to prepare and distribute meeting announcements and agendas.
- In coordination with the installation co-chair, prepare and verify the accuracy of RAB meeting minutes.
- Support development of RAB goals and objectives in consultation with the RAB and in accordance with DoW Component guidance.
- *Ensure that all community RAB members have the opportunity to participate in an open and constructive manner.*
- *Represent and raise community issues and concerns related to cleanup.*
- *Help identify outreach and communication methods that will reach a broad public audience with the goal of advancing the cleanup.*
- *Assist in sharing cleanup-related information with the public.*
- *Coordinate with the installation co-chair to conduct periodic training assessments and ensure that the RAB is meeting its members' training needs.*
- *Report back to the community and coordinate with other RAB members to ensure that they are adequately representing the diverse interests of the community at RAB meetings.*

3.4 Community RAB Members

Contribute diverse community interests, concerns, and perspectives to the RAB.

- Voluntarily serve on the RAB without compensation.
- Attend meetings.
- Select community co-chair.
- Provide feedback on cleanup activities in a constructive manner.
- *Represent and communicate community concerns to the RAB.*[4]
- *Provide and exchange knowledge, information, and perspectives in the context of cleanup discussions.*
- *Review, evaluate, and comment on specific cleanup documents and other materials.*
- *Help identify outreach and communication methods that will reach a broad audience and communicate cleanup issues to the community.*

3.5 Additional RAB Participants: Local, State, Tribal, and Federal Government Participants

Contribute information and help provide broad representation. RABs may include additional participants that represent community interests, concerns, and perspectives such as those from local, State, Federal, and tribal entities.

- Attend meetings.
- Serve as a resource on cleanup issues.
- *Review specific cleanup documents and other related materials.*
- *Assist in education and training for RAB members.*
- *Provide feedback on cleanup activities in a constructive manner.*
- *Provide and exchange knowledge, information, and perspectives in the context of cleanup discussions.*
- *Facilitate flexible and innovative resolution of environmental issues and concerns.*

While DoW encourages individual tribal members to participate on RABs, RABs in no way replace or serve as a substitute forum for the government-to-government relationship between DoW and Federally recognized tribes.

4 Community members cannot use their position as a RAB member to advance their position in legal matters with the U.S. government.

3.6 Public Participants

Members of the public may attend RAB meetings to ask questions, share suggestions, and raise concerns. Note that public participation in RAB meetings is not required by the RAB Rule, but it is encouraged to ensure comprehensive representation of community concerns.

- Observe rules and operating procedures when attending RAB meetings.
- *Appear before or file statements with a RAB.*
- *Make comments and ask questions during portions of RAB meetings in which public comments are solicited.*
- *Provide feedback in a constructive manner.*
- *Provide and exchange knowledge, information, and perspectives.*
- *Review, evaluate, and comment on specific cleanup documents and other materials.*

Section 4: RAB Operations

4.1 RAB Operating Procedures

As soon as members are selected, the new RAB should establish its operating procedures. Per the RAB Rule, each RAB is required to follow standard operating procedures that guide its execution and ensure it functions effectively. However, RABs also have the flexibility to customize operating procedures or develop new ones based on the specific needs of their members, community, and installation.

Tailored operating procedures ensure a RAB's effectiveness; they should capture the lists shown below in Figure 3. Procedures shown in plain text, not italicized, are required by regulation. Italicized text reflects best practices that the Department has identified for the creation and operation of successful RABs.

RAB OPERATING PROCEDURES SHOULD COVER:

GENERAL

Mission statement *with clearly defined goals and objectives, as determined by the co-chairs in consultation with the RAB*

Methods for resolving disputes

Methods for keeping the public informed about RAB proceedings

Review of public comments and responses

Specifics on the size of the RAB, periods of membership, and co-chair length of service

Participation of the general public

Frequency for reviewing operating procedures (e.g., every five years)

MEETING LOGISTICS

Attendance requirements

Meeting announcements

Developing next meeting's agenda and issues to address

Location and frequency

Development, approval, and distribution procedures for meeting minutes

Rules of order

Frequency, communication medium, and best approach for disseminating meeting announcements community-wide

MEMBERS & TRAINING

Procedures for selecting, replacing, or adding RAB members

Procedures for selecting or replacing co-chairs

Frequency and procedures for conducting training

RAB size & periods of membership/co-chair service

Figure 3. RAB Operating Procedures

4.2 RAB Mission Statement

The RAB co-chairs are responsible for developing the RAB's mission statement, incorporating feedback from the members and guidance from the applicable DoW Component. The RAB mission statement details the RAB's goals and purpose to help focus and facilitate cleanup discussions during meetings. It should be clear, concise, inclusive, and specific to the RAB and its membership. A good mission statement describes a RAB's core values and answers important questions including why the RAB exists and how it serves the community and the Department.

RAB MISSION STATEMENT EXAMPLES

- The RAB mission is to establish and maintain a forum with stakeholders to exchange information about the installation's cleanup program in an open and interactive dialogue.
- The RAB mission is to establish and maintain open and interactive dialogue among the military, environmental regulatory agencies, and the local community concerning the installation's cleanup program.
- DoW recognizes the importance of stakeholder participation in cleanup activities. The RAB is intended to improve public participation and awareness by soliciting and providing community input to the cleanup decision-making process. The RAB is intended to bring together members who reflect a diverse interest within the local area, enabling the early and continued two-way flow of information, concerns, and needs between the local communities, interest groups, DoW, and associated environmental regulatory agencies. The RAB will monitor cleanup progress and ensure that all known stakeholders have a voice and can actively participate in a timely and thorough manner in the review of priorities, schedules, plans, investigations, and reports.

4.3 RAB Meeting Frequency and Location

RAB meetings are required to be open to the public. A RAB should meet as often as necessary to achieve its goals, and members can adjust the meeting schedule accordingly. For example, the RAB may decide to meet more frequently if it is reviewing and commenting on specific cleanup documents. Overall, the Department recommends that an active RAB meet at least once a year, and that the meetings occur at reasonable times and in publicly accessible locations or virtually.

DOCUMENTING RAB ACTIVITIES

The installation is responsible for documenting RAB activities and meeting minutes in a publicly accessible information repository. Meeting minutes must include a record of attendees, document all matters discussed, and include copies of any relevant documents (e.g., records, reports, appendixes, working papers, drafts, studies, or agendas) that were made available to, prepared for, or prepared by the RAB.

At a minimum, the repository must include:

- The installation's efforts to survey community interest in forming a RAB;
- The steps taken to establish a RAB where there is sufficient and sustained community interest;
- Administrative expenses (e.g., printing posters) associated with the RAB;
- How the RAB relates to the overall community involvement program; and
- The steps taken to adjourn, dissolve, or reestablish the RAB.

When RAB input has been used in installation decision-making regarding a cleanup activity, it should also be documented in the installation's Administrative Record.

4.4 Funding for RABs

The Installation Restoration Program Manager follows a process to plan, program, and budget for eligible RAB activities.[5] This process requires time and coordination. To expedite funding for RAB support, Installation Restoration Program Managers should be planning for RAB activities in advance and keeping the Installation Commander informed of these actions. Table 1 details which RAB activities qualify for funding and which do not.

ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING	INELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING
RAB establishment and membership selection	Transportation costs
Updates to an installation's website	Compensation for volunteer time
Site-specific and relevant training	Meals and beverages at meetings
Meeting announcements, facilities, and facilitators including translators	RAB member business cards
Mailing list maintenance and distribution	Computers, offices, and other office/business materials

Table 1. RAB Activity Eligibility for Funding

5 To support RAB activities, active installations and FUDS properties use the DoW Component's Environmental Restoration accounts and BRAC locations use their BRAC accounts.

4.5 RAB Member Training

Training for RAB members is not required, but it can further their ability to fulfill their voluntary responsibilities. It also helps facilitate stronger collaboration among stakeholders and understanding about the Department's cleanup processes. If desired, installations can provide RAB members with initial orientation training regarding the purpose and responsibilities of the RAB, cleanup technologies and processes, technical terminology, chemicals of concern, and sampling protocols. To be eligible for funding as a RAB administrative expense, trainings must be site-specific, relevant to installation cleanup activities, and must benefit the establishment and operation of a RAB.

Training can occur either as part of a RAB meeting or as a separate session. For example, a RAB can offer short, 20-minute training sessions before the meeting starts. These optional sessions can be conducted by a restoration staff member, a contractor, a partner agency representative, or other technical expert. Each training should provide the RAB members the opportunity to share what topics they would like to learn more about in future meetings.

Training is also an opportunity for installations to inform RAB members about the availability of independent technical advice through DoW's TAPP program. DoW may use remedial project managers, cleanup contractors, regulators, local university staff, and non-governmental organization personnel to provide specialized training through TAPP.

BEST PRACTICES FROM THE FIELD ON MEMBER TRAINING

Installation representatives and the RAB should work together to determine what topics, concerns, or questions the community has and identify training opportunities accordingly. For example, does the community want to better understand how groundwater flows and how this impacts the ongoing investigation or cleanup? Would a tour of the site help identify where and why the Department is conducting cleanup activities? The community and installation should work together to determine the best timing for engagements and trainings.

Site visits are another valuable tool for RAB training and enrichment. As an example, if a monitoring well is being installed, the RAB can work with the restoration team to arrange a site visit and invite members to observe as the well is drilled. Similarly, it may be useful to invite RAB members to observe and learn about on-base environmental restoration operations, such as the installation's remediation systems.

4.6 TAPP

TAPP is a DoW program that provides RAB members with independent technical assistance to interpret scientific information and explain engineering concepts with the goal of contributing to the efficiency, effectiveness, or timeliness of installation cleanup activities. TAPP funding can be used to contract for support to interpret technical documents into plain language and explain cleanup technologies, scientific information, and health risks. By equipping RABs with the expertise they need to confidently review, participate in, and comment on technical information, TAPP furthers the Department's goal of promoting transparency throughout the cleanup process. Figure 4 shows how the TAPP program can support RABs:

RAB

- Members may not have the required cleanup knowledge or experience
- Provides in-house technical expertise when technical capabilities exist

TAPP

- Provides community members with access to independent technical support
- Helps the community understand the cleanup process and effectively participate in and comment on progress and technical documents
- Improves RAB members' understanding of scientific and engineering issues of cleanup activities

Figure 4. How the TAPP Program Can Support RABs

Table 2 provides examples of eligible and ineligible TAPP activities.

ELIGIBLE TAPP ACTIVITIES	INELIGIBLE TAPP ACTIVITIES
Interpretation of technical jargon in DoW's cleanup and remediation reports	Litigation or paying attorney fees; political activities or lobbying
Simplified information or training by a technical expert to explain cleanup technologies and related topics	Public outreach activities
Helping RAB members understand the overall environmental remediation process and how it relates to protecting human health	Generation of new data and more sampling; epidemiology or health studies
	Reopening of final DoW decisions

OTHER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

If your RAB does not have access to technical assistance through TAPP, EPA has similar programs that may be available:

- Technical Assistance Grant (TAG)
- Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC)
- Technical Assistance Plan (TAP)

Follow the hyperlinks below to review information on each program.

- TAG: https://www.epa.gov/superfund/technical-assistance-grant-tag-program
- TASC: https://www.epa.gov/superfund/technical-assistance-services-communities-tasc-program
- TAP: https://www.epa.gov/superfund/technical-assistance-plan

Section 5: Adjourning, Dissolving, and Reestablishing a RAB

A RAB's activities stop when it adjourns or when it is dissolved. If a RAB is adjourned or dissolved but cleanup activities at the installation continue, the installation will continue other public involvement and outreach activities in accordance with its CIP. Interested individuals should contact the former installation co-chair or other relevant installation POC (see "Finding the Installation Cleanup POC," page 8) for information, including opportunities for involvement.

5.1 RAB Adjournment

Adjournment occurs when there is no longer a need for or community interest in a RAB. The Installation Commander determines if and when to adjourn a RAB after consulting with and considering all comments provided by RAB members, the community, and any representatives from the EPA, States, ***tribes***, and local government, as appropriate. Considerations prior to adjournment include:

- The installation has signed a ***decision document*** for all DERP sites on the installation;
- An installation has all remedies in place or achieved response complete at all sites and no further cleanup decisions are required;
- The RAB has achieved its desired end goals as outlined in its operating procedures;
- There is no longer sufficient and sustained community interest; or
- DoW transferred the land out of its control and the transferee assumed day-to-day responsibility for making cleanup decisions.

Note that RABs may be adjourned if there is no longer community interest, even if cleanup activities are ongoing.

If the Installation Commander decides to adjourn the RAB after consultations, they will notify RAB members and the public of the decision in writing and other media channels as necessary. They will document the rationale for adjournment, including a description of ongoing public involvement opportunities for interested community members, in a memorandum for inclusion in the Administrative Record. The RAB is considered permanently adjourned unless the Department discovers new conditions that could lead to the Installation Commander reestablishing the RAB. See **Section 5.4: Reestablishing a RAB** for more information.

In some instances, it may be appropriate for a RAB to continue operating after cleanup activities are complete at an installation, but operation and maintenance of a remedy are ongoing. For example, the RAB may meet to review the outcome of a CERCLA five-year review or discuss long-term management of land use controls implemented in connection with the cleanup remedy.

A RAB does not have to formally adjourn. A RAB may stop without formal adjournment if a community loses interest. However, the Department recommends that a RAB formally adjourn to provide community members an opportunity to participate in the adjournment decision.

DO RABS NEED TO FORMALLY ADJOURN?

No, formal adjournment is preferred but not necessary. A RAB may stop meeting without formal adjournment if the community loses interest. However, formally adjourning a RAB provides all parties with a sense of closure.

5.2 RAB Dissolution

Dissolution occurs when the RAB has become ineffective and is no longer fulfilling its intended purposes of providing community input and advising installation leadership on cleanup projects. For example, dissolution may be necessary if members no longer offer constructive input or are unable to have productive discussions (e.g., RAB meetings are spent discussing issues unrelated to cleanup; members are unable to collectively discuss the cleanup activities affecting the installation and community).

Dissolution is rare and requires approval from the DoW Component's Environmental Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS). As with RAB adjournment, the Installation Commander will first consult with and consider comments provided by RAB members, the community, and any representatives from the EPA, States, tribes, and local government, as appropriate. However, dissolution also requires the installation to provide a 30-day public comment period on the proposal to dissolve—please reference the RAB Rule, section 202.10, for specific dissolution procedures.

Dissolution should be the last resort to resolve RAB conflict. Prior to dissolution, if a RAB becomes ineffective, the Installation Commander should explore means to resolve the conflict (e.g., involving a professional facilitator or mediator, directly addressing membership issues, or engaging the installation's PA officer).

Dissolution of a RAB is not necessarily permanent. The Installation Commander may reestablish a RAB if the issues that resulted in dissolution are resolved.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS IF A RAB IS ADJOURNED OR DISSOLVED

The installation must document decisions to adjourn or dissolve a RAB in the Administrative Record; however, the documentation requirements are different for each. If a RAB is adjourned, the installation must include a memorandum documenting the rationale for adjournment in a memorandum in the Administrative Record. If a RAB is dissolved, the installation must include the recommendation they submitted to the DAS on dissolution, a responsiveness summary, and the rationale for dissolution in the Administrative Record.

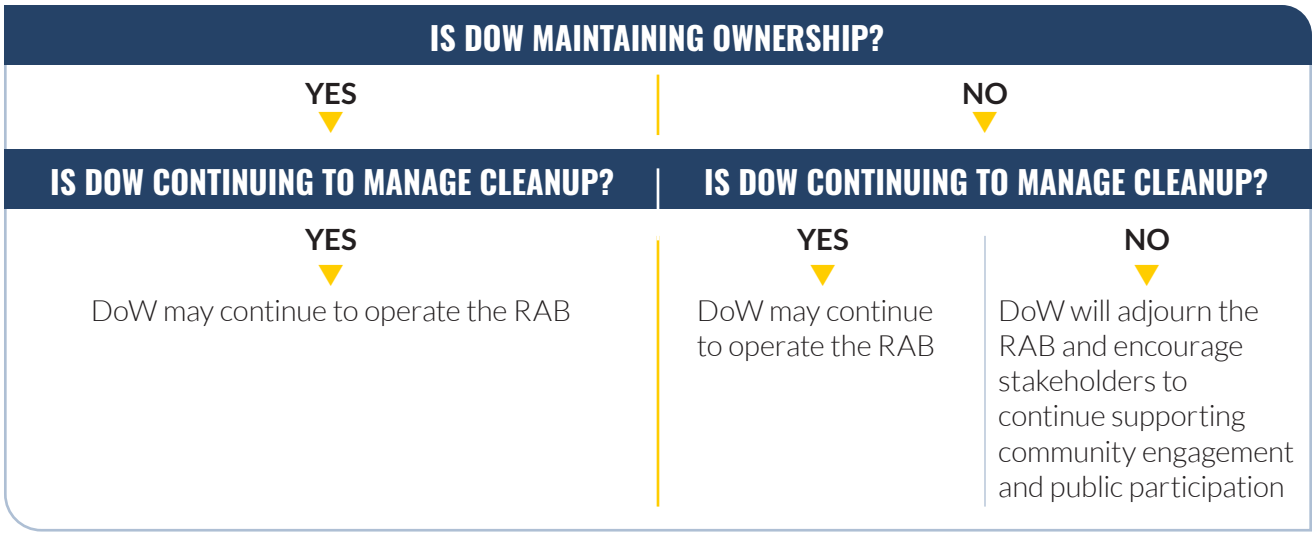

Figure 5. How DoW Supports RABs under Different Installation Closure Circumstances

5.3 Installation Closure or Land Transfer

If an installation is closing, but DoW is maintaining ownership of the property and management of cleanup issues, the Department may continue to operate the RAB. This may occur at installations closing under BRAC.

If the Department transfers and relinquishes control of the installation and is no longer responsible for day-to-day cleanup decisions, it will also relinquish its role in the RAB, including provision of resources. DoW will adjourn the RAB and encourage the new owners to continue supporting community engagement and public participation. If the community wishes to continue its structured involvement in any remaining cleanup efforts, an independent group of community members may continue the RAB's work and functions with EPA or the State regulatory agency. In some limited circumstances, the Department may continue to be responsible for day-to-day cleanup decisions after it has transferred property to another entity. In those cases, the Department may continue to operate the RAB if there is sufficient community interest.

Figure 5 shows the Department's support for RABs under different circumstances surrounding installation closure or land transfer.

5.4 Reestablishing a RAB

When all cleanup decisions have been made and required remedies are in place and are properly operating at an installation, reassessment of the community interest for reestablishing the RAB is not necessary. However, if a RAB is adjourned or dissolved but the cleanup is not complete, or the cleanup remedy is not yet in place and operating properly, reestablishment may be appropriate. In these cases, the Installation Commander may reestablish the RAB if there is significant and sustained community interest in ongoing or new cleanup activities at the installation. The following sections describe the reestablishment processes for adjourned and dissolved RABs. In addition to the processes below, for both adjourned and dissolved RABs, if the Installation Commander does not find significant and sustained community interest in reestablishment, they will document the reassessment procedures and findings and include the documentation in the installation's Administrative Record and the information repository.

5.5 Process for Reestablishing an Adjourned RAB

As noted above, if a RAB is adjourned but the cleanup is not complete, or the cleanup remedy is not yet in place and operating properly, the Installation Commander should reassess community interest in a RAB and evaluate if it should be reestablished at least every 24 months. If there is significant and sustained community interest, the Installation Commander should reestablish the RAB.

5.6 Process for Reestablishing a Dissolved RAB

Similarly, if a RAB is dissolved, the Installation Commander should reassess interest at least every 24 months if the cleanup is not complete or the cleanup remedy is not yet in place and operating properly. If there is significant and sustained community interest, the Installation Commander should consider reestablishing the RAB unless the issues that resulted in dissolution are unresolved or cannot be resolved. If the issues are unresolved or cannot be resolved, the Installation Commander will request an exception to reestablishment from the DoW Component's Environmental DAS. If those conditions no longer exist at a previously dissolved RAB, and there is sufficient and sustained interest in reestablishment, the Installation Commander should recommend to the DAS that the RAB be reestablished.

If the Installation Commander intends to recommend reestablishing a dissolved RAB, they shall notify the public of the proposal to reestablish the RAB and provide a 30-day public comment period on the proposal. The Installation Commander will review public comments; consult with EPA, State, tribal, or local government representatives, as appropriate; prepare a responsiveness summary; and make a recommendation on reestablishing a RAB. The Installation Commander will send the recommendation to reestablish the RAB, a summary of the responses to public comments, and all supporting documentation to the DoW Component's Environmental DAS for approval. Once the DAS approves or disapproves, the Installation Commander will notify the public of the decision and, if appropriate, begin reestablishment.

5.7 Determining Membership for a Reestablished RAB

If DoW is reestablishing the RAB following a hiatus, the Installation Commander should reach out to former community RAB members to gauge their interest in resuming their positions with the RAB. If community RAB members choose not to return to the RAB, or if the Installation Commander is no longer able to identify or contact the former community co-chair and members, they will identify new members. To do this, the Installation Commander should follow the standard process for soliciting members for a new RAB, as well as any additional steps established in the RAB's operating procedures (see **2.5 Selecting RAB Members** and **Section 4: RAB Operations**).

5.8 Operating Procedures for a Reestablished RAB

The members of the reestablished RAB will determine whether to maintain or revise the prior operating procedures or to develop entirely new operating procedures. If a RAB is reestablished following a short-term hiatus and the former RAB members resume their positions, then the RAB should consider keeping their prior operating procedures.

If a RAB is reestablished following a long-term adjournment with either new or former members, new or revised operating procedures are likely appropriate. If the original RAB was dissolved, the updated or new operating procedures should address and help prevent the issues that may have contributed to dissolution.

Section 6: Best Practices

Effective RABs can be key tools in DoW-community collaboration that:

- Increase stakeholder knowledge and understanding;
- Build, maintain, and repair trust and credibility; and
- Identify and resolve potential conflicts.

This section provides examples of best practices for conducting RABs effectively. They are not required to be implemented at all cleanup sites. The best practices highlighted in this section reflect lessons learned from forums, interviews, and other research activities associated with the ***DoW Environmental Cleanup Communication and Outreach (ECCO) Initiative***. It is important to keep in mind that every community and installation function differently, so there may be concepts and creative ideas not described here that are more effective for a particular RAB.

STRATEGIC INSIGHTS FOR EFFECTIVE OUTCOMES

In 2022, the Department established the Environmental Cleanup Communication and Outreach (ECCO) Initiative to enhance dialogue and communication with communities, RAB members, environmental regulators, and other stakeholders. ECCO's priority is to foster transparency and goodwill among communities and installations as they participate in cleanup activities. Through the ECCO Initiative, the Department engages with local communities to examine the effectiveness of dialogue and communication methods used across the DoW Components during the cleanup process. Lessons learned from the ECCO Initiative on how to help support installations to better collaborate with, listen to, and equip communities during the cleanup process inform updates to DoW best practices, tools, and materials, including this updated RAB Handbook.

Throughout this section, you will find callout boxes that highlight key takeaways and strategic advice from the ECCO Initiative on how to implement and operate an effective RAB. The callouts offer proven practical guidance and actionable recommendations to replicate or enhance success in similar efforts. These insights represent real-world experiences and outcomes observed in the field.

6.1 Stakeholder Identification

Using multiple methods to identify stakeholders—such as analyzing media coverage and having conversations with community members and leaders—can result in more holistic and comprehensive community engagement. The Installation Commander can also distribute community interest forms online and physical copies during initial outreach to determine the

level of engagement and different perspectives among community members. Understanding community perspectives may also indicate that communications products need to be translated or interpreted into another language to maximize understanding, interest, and participation.

WHY STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION MATTERS

Identifying stakeholders is a crucial starting point when an installation is establishing a RAB. Understanding the stakeholders and their varying perspectives and concerns enables tailored outreach efforts to build trust, foster collaboration, and meet the needs of all parties.

The installation's CIP is another source for identifying key stakeholder groups in the community. CIPs include strategies for engaging community members in the cleanup process and involving them in decisions that may affect their community. CIPs also address how DoW will conduct outreach regarding cleanup activities and how the public can participate in the cleanup process.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLANS

Community Involvement Plans (CIPs) are developed to support meaningful community involvement throughout the cleanup process. CIPs are living, community-oriented documents that enable installations to tailor their communications and outreach to meet the specific needs of the communities around them. To develop a CIP, DoW and community members collaborate to determine the best avenues for communication and public involvement. The resulting CIP outlines a tailored communications and public involvement strategy based on these identified avenues. While not all installations involved in cleanup will have a RAB, all installations conducting cleanup under CERCLA will have a CIP that details how the installation communicates with and engages the public.

Installations use their CIPs to ensure the community is informed about and involved in the cleanup process. A CIP enables an installation to specify activities that address community needs, concerns, and expectations; serves as a site-specific strategy for outreach and community engagement activities during the cleanup process; educates the affected community; and provides resources to help the community understand and participate meaningfully in the cleanup process.

It is useful to routinely share information about the RAB via a combination of multiple media methods, including communications in multiple languages, to reach a diverse set of stakeholders. The installation website, local print media such as a newspaper, and social media posts can be effective tools for sharing information about RABs. Other methods for advertising information about RABs include:

- Placing flyers or announcements in local community centers or places of worship, restaurants, schools, libraries, public transportation stops, municipal buildings, or Chambers of Commerce;
- Sending emails to community leaders, existing community groups, and members who might be willing to share information with other contacts;

- Visiting meetings held by community organizations to briefly describe the RAB and offer information about the cleanup; and
- Generating a newsletter that communicates restoration progress with the RAB and the community between RAB meetings.

6.2 Effective Engagement

It is important to communicate, build trust, and maintain relationships among the key stakeholders involved in or impacted by cleanup. In particular, engaging with stakeholders early can help identify potential challenges, gather valuable input, and create a sense of shared ownership in a RAB's success. By engaging stakeholders early and often, RAB interactions can enhance community relations as well as help avert conflict and controversy that could potentially impact day-to-day operations and longer-term plans for completing cleanup actions.

THE POWER OF EMPATHY

Being able to listen and communicate with empathy deepens relationships, builds trust, and can help avert or diffuse conflict and controversy. In other words, it facilitates productive, collaborative progress towards RAB goals despite potentially conflicting opinions and perspectives. To build a norm of empathetic communication:

- **Actively listen** and give others your full attention without interruptions, making an effort to understand their perspective.
- **Acknowledge and validate others' perspectives**, show your interest and engagement, even if you do not entirely agree.
- **Practice patience**, allowing others sufficient time to express their viewpoints.
- **Paraphrase or summarize what they have said** to confirm your understanding.
- **Do not avoid difficult questions**; provide open and honest answers.
- **Limit or explain technical jargon** or acronyms to effectively communicate with all stakeholders.
- **Maintain positive body language** and make eye contact.
- **Refrain from making judgments** or assumptions about others' feelings.
- **Be respectful** of differing viewpoints and avoid confrontational language.

6.3 RAB Frequency and Scheduling

RABs that meet routinely during the restoration process tend to have more positive outcomes. Collectively, RABs should determine how often they will meet (e.g., monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually) and whether meetings will be in-person, virtual, or hybrid (e.g., both in-person and virtual). Hybrid formats can allow scientific and technical presenters to contribute their

experience and insights even if they are not local to the area and cannot to attend in person. Often, meeting frequency is determined by the cleanup timeline. If a RAB meets infrequently (e.g., once a year), consider conducting additional informational gatherings, such as open houses or listening sessions, between official meetings. Any reduction in meeting frequency should be discussed in advance with the RAB community co-chair and communicated clearly to RAB members.

RAB BEST PRACTICES: IN-PERSON VS. VIRTUAL

Stakeholder needs or constraints should determine if in-person or virtual meetings, or a combination of both, will be effective for conducting RAB business. RAB meetings conducted in person can be more effective in building and maintaining relationships and fostering closer collaboration. Virtual RABs are effective when an in-person RAB is not possible, or the number of participants will be greater if a virtual RAB opportunity is available. Virtual RAB meetings can also be leveraged to share out periodic updates on ongoing cleanup actions. Hybrid RAB meetings may maximize participation by allowing for both in-person and virtual participants. A hybrid format also allows individual RAB members and public participants to select the most convenient way to participate.

CONSISTENCY FACILITATES SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT

A regular RAB meeting schedule, such as holding meetings on the fourth Thursday of January, April, July, and October, allows meetings to be planned well in advance, which streamlines logistics such as venue reservations and facilitates consistent attendance. If changes are needed, the announcement process established in each RAB's operating procedures ensures everyone is easily informed.

RABs should collectively determine the best time of day to host meetings to ensure maximum participation. Meetings scheduled during the evening or right before or after other community meetings or events are typically easier for RAB members and public participants to attend.

BRIDGE THE GAP: STAY CONNECTED BETWEEN RAB MEETINGS

A newsletter can be a brief and informative communication tool for providing general updates on cleanup progress or information about upcoming RAB meetings or a vacancy on the RAB. The newsletter can be distributed via email or posted on the installation's website and social media platforms. Other stakeholders and organizations might be willing to assist with the dissemination of the newsletter via email or by posting the newsletter in a visible location at their place of business. When resources are limited, use existing communication channels like social media or newsletters from other RAB members' organizations.

6.4 RAB Meeting Execution

Conducting an effective RAB meeting can be challenging, especially if some members have a negative perception of cleanup activities. However, two-way dialogue helps in establishing trust and maintaining positive relationships in the community.

RABs can also build engagement by hosting a poster session in conjunction with a meeting. A poster session helps to visually convey information to stakeholders about the cleanup process, cleanup activities in progress at the installation(s), and timelines associated with cleanup activity status, updates, and progress. Making a poster session available at least one hour before a RAB meeting allows stakeholders time to gather information and formulate questions. When high attendance is anticipated at a poster session event, identifying "greeters" to welcome participants and "rovers" to assist participants may provide a more personalized experience. Greeters can introduce individuals with specific questions to the right subject matter expert or show them a useful poster station. Rovers can interact with and guide public participants throughout the room. These roles help answer questions and enhance participant engagement.

RABs can also consider engaging a meeting facilitator. With their expertise, facilitators can foster balanced and productive discussions, ensuring that every voice is heard while keeping the meeting focused on its goals. Involve the facilitator in the planning process and dry runs so that they can be prepared and help anticipate potential obstacles.

BENEFITS OF FORMAL FACILITATION

Using a meeting facilitator can significantly assist in achieving RAB goals and outcomes. Formal facilitation can provide the following benefits:

NEUTRALITY AND OBJECTIVITY
A formal facilitator acts as a neutral party, which helps foster objectivity and build trust among participants.

EFFECTIVE MEETING MANAGEMENT
Facilitators expertly manage meetings, keeping them on time and on topic. They can structure the agenda, guide discussions, and help ensure all voices are heard.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION
In conflicts or heated discussions, a facilitator can mediate and help resolve issues by using professional techniques to de-escalate tensions, guiding the group back toward collaboration.

IMPROVED COMMUNICATION
A facilitator clarifies points of confusion, summarizes discussions, and ensures that technical or complex information is communicated effectively to all participants, regardless of their background or expertise.

ENHANCED PARTICIPATION
By creating a safe and structured environment, facilitators encourage active participation from all members, including those who may be hesitant to speak up.

DOCUMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP
A facilitator often helps document meeting outcomes and action items. This helps ensure comprehensive record-keeping and facilitate follow-up.

FOCUS ON GOALS
By guiding discussion, the facilitator can help keep the group focused on the meeting's objectives. This focus helps prevent the meeting from getting sidetracked by unrelated issues.

6.5 RAB Meetings are One Piece of the Puzzle

RAB meetings should be one part of a comprehensive communications program, as outlined in the installation's CIP. While the RAB can become central to community involvement efforts, they should be just one part of a broader outreach effort. Other options, like open house style public meetings, are better suited for one-on-one communication with individual community members. Offering diverse engagement and feedback opportunities helps create a more collaborative atmosphere at RAB meetings by giving members additional chances to interact with environmental cleanup staff.

Glossary

Administrative Record: Contains the documents that form the basis for the selection of a CERCLA response action. The DoW Component shall establish and maintain administrative records and make them available to the public at or near the facility at issue *(DoD Manual [DoDM] 4715.20, DERP Management, March 9, 2012)*.

Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Locations: Installations that are being or have been closed or are being realigned by BRAC but are still under the jurisdiction of the DoW and those properties that have been transferred out of the Department by the BRAC process but where the DoW retains restoration responsibilities *(DoDI 4715.07, DERP, May 21, 2013)*.

Community Involvement Plan (CIP): CIPs address how DoW will conduct outreach about cleanup activities and how the public can participate throughout the cleanup process.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA): Federal law (Sections 9601 through 9675 of Title 42, U.S.C.) that guides DoW's investigation and cleanup of hazardous substances, pollutants, and contaminants in the United States when past DoW activities are the source of a release to the environment.

Cleanup Activities: Removal actions, investigation, remedy selection, remedy design, remedy implementation, and long-term management.

Cleanup Remedy: Cleanup alternatives selected to address a release or threatened release of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminant into the environment.

Decision Document (DD): Generic term used to describe the documentation for the selection of a removal action, remedial action, or other type of cleanup action. Examples of DDs include an action memorandum (i.e., document describing a removal action selected in accordance with subpart 300.415 of NCP) and Record of Decision (i.e., document describing the selection of a remedial action) *(DoDI 4715.07, DERP, May 21, 2013)*.

Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP): DoW's overarching program for conducting cleanup at active installations, Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS), Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) locations, and National Guard facilities.

DoW Environmental Cleanup Communication and Outreach (ECCO) Initiative: The ECCO Initiative examines the effectiveness of existing dialogue and communication methods currently used across the Military Departments and throughout the environmental cleanup process including RABs, community outreach events, and print, web, and social media. The Department intends to use lessons learned and the findings from the initiative to inform best management practices and develop communication tools that Department personnel can implement to better convey environmental cleanup information to the public and affected communities.

DoW Component: Office of the Secretary of War, the Military Departments, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoW Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within the Department *(Joint Publication 1, Volume 2)*.

Environmental Restoration: Shall include the identification, investigation, research and development, and cleanup of contamination from hazardous substances, including munitions and explosives of concern, and pollutants and contaminants *(RAB Rule, 32 CFR Part 202)*.

Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS) Property: A facility or site (property) that was under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of War and owned by, leased to, or otherwise possessed by the United States at the time of actions leading to contamination by hazardous substances. The FUDS program is limited to those real properties that were transferred from DoW control prior to October 17, 1986. Properties must be located within the United States *(DoDI 4715.07, DERP, May 21, 2013)*.

Installation: A base, camp, post, station, yard, center, homeport facility for any ship, or other activity under the jurisdiction of the DoW, including any leased facility, that is located within the United States. It does not include FUDS or any facility used primarily for civil works, rivers and harbors projects, or flood control projects *(DoDI 4715.07, DERP, May 21, 2013)*.

Installation Commander: Installation Commander shall include the Commanding Officer or the equivalent of a Commanding Officer at active installations; the Installation Commander or other Military Department officials who close the facility and are responsible for its disposal at Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) installations; or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project Management District Commander at FUDS *(RAB Rule, 32 CFR Part 202)*.

Munitions Response Site: Discrete location within a munitions response area that is known to require a munitions response *(32 CFR Part 179.3)*.

National Priorities List (NPL): List of sites of national priority among the known releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants throughout the United States and its territories. The NPL is intended primarily to guide EPA in determining which sites warrant further investigation *(U.S. EPA, Superfund: NPL)*.

RAB Rule: DoW promulgated the RAB Rule regarding the scope, characteristics, composition, funding, establishment, operation, adjournment, and dissolution of RABs. This rule implements the requirement established in 10 U.S.C. 2705(d)(2)(A), which requires the Secretary of War to prescribe regulation regarding RABs *(RAB Rule, 32 CFR Part 202)*.

Regulatory Agency: A Federal or State agency responsible for regulating, monitoring, managing, and protecting environment and public health concerns within a specific State or territory. Regulatory agencies oversee various aspects of environmental protection, including cleanup *(Adapted from EPA)*.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA): The principal Federal law in the U.S. governing the disposal of solid waste and hazardous waste. RCRA amended the Solid Waste Disposal Act of 1965 to address the increasing problems the nation faced from its growing volume of municipal and industrial waste. It set national goals for protecting human health and the natural environment from the potential hazards of waste disposal; conserving energy and natural resources; reducing the amount of waste generated through source reduction and recycling; and ensuring the management of waste in an environmentally sound manner.

Response Complete: Milestone signifying that the DoW Component has met the remedial action objectives for a site, documented the determination, and sought regulatory agreement. Response complete signifies that the Department has determined at the end of the preliminary assessment or site inspection or remedial investigation that no additional response action is required; achieved remedy is in place and the required remedial action-operation has achieved the remedial action objectives; or, where there is no remedial action-operation phase, the remedial action construction has achieved the remedial action objectives. Long-term management may occur after response complete is achieved *(DoDI 4715.07, DERP, May 21, 2013)*.

Stakeholders: Parties that may be affected by cleanup activities at an installation, including family members of military personnel and civilian workers, local and State governments and EPA for NPL properties, tribal community members and indigenous people, and current landowners, as appropriate *(RAB Rule, 32 CFR Part 202)*.

Tribes: Any Federally-recognized American Indian and Alaska Native government as defined by the most current Department of Interior/Bureau of Indian Affairs list of tribal entities published in the Federal Register pursuant to Section 104 of the Federally Recognized Tribe Act.

Acronyms

AR – Administrative Record
BRAC – Base Realignment and Closure
CERCLA – Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CIP – Community Involvement Plan
DAS – Deputy Assistant Secretary
DERP – Defense Environmental Restoration Program
DoW – Department of War
DoDI– Department of Defense Instruction
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
ECCO – Environmental Cleanup Communication and Outreach
FUDS – Formerly Used Defense Sites
NPL – National Priorities List
PA – Public Affairs
PFAS – Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substance
POC – Point of Contact
RAB – Restoration Advisory Board
RCRA – Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
TAG – Technical Assistance Grant
TAP – Technical Assistance Plan
TAPP – Technical Assistance for Public Participation
TASC – Technical Assistance Services for Communities

Index of Handbook Sub-Sections

1.1 RAB Topics, 5

1.2 Required RAB Activities, 5

1.3 Consensus Among RAB Members, 6

2.1 Criteria for Establishing a RAB, 7

2.2 Community Interest in Establishing a RAB, 8

2.3 Installation Communication and Engagement with Communities, 8

2.4 RAB Members, 9

2.5 Selecting RAB Members, 9

2.6 RAB Regulatory Members, 10

2.7 Number of Total RAB Members, 10

2.8 Adding and Selecting New Community RAB Members, 11

2.9 Reassessing Community Interest When an Installation Does Not Establish a RAB, 11

3.1 Installation Commander, 13

3.2 Installation Co-Chair, 13

3.3 Community Co-Chair, 14

3.4 Community RAB Members, 15

3.5 Additional RAB Participants: Local, State, Tribal, and Federal Government Participants, 15

3.6 Public Participants, 16

4.1 RAB Operating Procedures, 17

4.2 RAB Mission Statement, 18

4.3 RAB Meeting Frequency and Location, 18

4.4 Funding for RABs, 19

4.5 RAB Member Training, 20

4.6 TAPP, 20

5.1 RAB Adjournment, 22

5.2 RAB Dissolution, 23

5.3 Installation Closure or Land Transfer, 24

5.4 Reestablishing a RAB, 24

5.5 Process for Reestablishing an Adjourned RAB, 25

5.6 Process for Reestablishing a Dissolved RAB, 26

5.7 Determining Membership for a Reestablished RAB, 25

5.8 Operating Procedures for a Reestablished RAB, 25

6.1 Stakeholder Identification, 26

6.2 Effective Engagement, 28

6.3 RAB Frequency and Scheduling, 28

6.4 RAB Meeting Execution, 30

6.5 RAB Meetings are One Piece of the Puzzle, 31

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR