

SPOTLIGHT ON DTSC

Former McClellan Air Base Takes Off With Help From DTSC



Sure, the state [Department of Toxic Substances Control](#) is a regulatory agency. It protects human health and preserves the environment. But in doing so, it also creates jobs, generates much-needed property tax revenue and makes contaminated land productive again.

Case in point: the former McClellan Air Force base near Sacramento, which until it closed in 2001, was one of the largest employers and industrial facilities in California. The closure sucked billions of dollars out of the local economy, but today private developers are converting the former military site into a [business park](#). About 230 businesses and agencies employ thousands of people – and more is planned.

Federal, state and county agencies have had roles at McClellan, but DTSC is the lead state agency, and has played an integral role in its revival. ([Check out this video from 2011](#)). More recently, the department was instrumental in getting Gov. Brown to approve the early transfer of 528 acres from the Air Force to the developers.

Usually, the federal government cannot transfer land until it is contaminant free, and this site was impacted by releases of industrial solvents, radium paint, combustion waste product, pesticides, toxic metals, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), as well as fuel spills, and other pollutants. But, the Air Force has agreed to pay McClellan Business Park \$24.8 million to clean it up, and upon completion potentially creating

hundreds of more jobs and thousands of dollars in property tax revenue.

DTSC was the quarterback of sorts in the transfer, ensuring all requirements were met, the land use controls were in place, that human health was not threatened and that financial commitments were negotiated. The process took about two years, and the documents filled a number of three-inch binders. At least 115 parcels changed ownership – and you thought buying a house required a lot of signatures!

“It was a significant amount of work,” said Charlie Ridenour, a branch chief for DTSC’s cleanup program.

But it was oh so important. The property, which included open land, paved parking, warehouse and office buildings totaling 3 million square feet, represents about 18 percent of the base’s 3,000 acres. Only 48 percent of it had tenants or was in use, so that leaves plenty of opportunity for the new owners to recruit new business. Read more in this [Sacramento Business Journal story](#), and in [this](#) Sacramento Bee item.

The former air base is one of the largest economic development and infill reuse projects in Northern California. About 15,000 people live or work on the site, but Sacramento County officials estimate that fully developed it could eventually be home to some 35,000 jobs and generate more than \$6.6 million in property tax and \$1.1 million in local sales tax revenue.

McClellan is just one instance of DTSC helping clean up and reuse property in the state. [Here’s](#) what it did at Almaden Quicksilver County Park in Santa Clara County, and [at schools](#) across the state. There is only so much land to go around, so it’s crucial to make it as productive as possible.

