

March 22, 2023

**Army transfers thousands of acres of land to local Oregon communities.**



Pictured L to R: Lt. Gen. Kevin Vereen, Sherri Smith, Jerry Healy, Joe Taylor, John Shafer, Lisa Mittelsdorf, David Sykes, Kat Brigham, Greg Smith. Pictured in the front row l-r: The Honorable Rachel Jacobson and Kim Puzey.

WASHINGTON – The Hon. Rachel Jacobson, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment, hosted a ceremony at the Pentagon on March 20 with Lt. Gen. Kevin Vereen, the Army’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Installations (G-9), to celebrate the transfer of more than 9,500 acres of land associated with the former Umatilla Chemical Depot, Oregon, to the local community.

On March 3rd the Army transferred the land to the Columbia Development Authority in Boardman, Oregon.

**This is the fourth largest real estate transaction in the Army’s Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) history, and the first in nearly 20 years.**

The CDA is made up of five partners through an intergovernmental agreement, including the Port of Umatilla, Port of Morrow, Umatilla County, Morrow County, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Ms. Jacobson explained that the “conveyance will place part of the ~9,500 acres of property into productive re-use for the community. Another part will become an important cultural site for the beneficial use of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. A third part will contribute to the historical preservation of the Oregon Trail. The proceeds the Army receives from CDA will be re-invested into environmental cleanup activities across our remaining BRAC sites.”

“It’s truly a win-win-win outcome for all parties,” she said.

“This Transfer represents what can be accomplished when partners come together for a mutually desired outcome,” said Greg Smith Executive Director for the Columbia Development Authority. “To be authorized to execute such an agenda is a privilege.”

“The Umatilla transfer is a culmination of a 35-year effort that started with realigning the installation under BRAC 1988 and closure of the installation under the BRAC 2005 round,” Vereen said. “Umatilla has been a very complex conveyance requiring cooperation and coordination between many local, state, and federal organizations and agencies. This milestone is a tribute to the many individuals, organizations and agencies that made this day possible.”

“The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) was essential to ending a generation-long Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union. The Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) began the process of returning the former Umatilla Chemical Depot to the Columbia Development Authority. Necessary to this end was the incineration or safe transfer of eleven percent of the entire chemical stockpile of the United States.” Kim Puzey, CDA Chairman and Port of Umatilla General Manager.

“Many visionaries have worked diligently towards this goal for 30 years. This transfer is the culmination of their efforts. It is exciting to witness this historic event take place today,” says Port of Morrow Executive Director Lisa Mittelsdorf. “The Port would like to sincerely thank the Army and local leadership for their dedicated commitment to return 9,500 acres of the Umatilla Chemical Army Depot in Morrow and Umatilla County back to local authority where it can be used for the cultural and economic benefit of our region.”

Kat Brigham “CTUIR is very glad the chemical weapons have been destroyed and the land transfer is completed. Now it is time to move forward with the planning. Great job everyone.”

Now that the CDA is the new owner of the property, there is renewed interest in the development of the land, and well over 3,100 acres are already slated for industrial development.

“This is one of the most significant industrial sites in the State of Oregon,” said Greg Smith, Executive Director of the CDA.

“This is such a surreal moment. There have been many great community leaders, including some mentors of mine, who have worked on this. To see this finally get across the finish line, and being a part of it, is very exciting.” John Shafer, Umatilla County Commissioner.

“Completion of this transfer represents new opportunity not only for Morrow County, but for the entire region with job creation for our citizens, new opportunities for our young people and enhanced income for county, schools and districts that provide services to our citizens,” David Sykes Chair Morrow County Commissioner.”

A local celebration is being planned for July.

Past CDA Board Members are Senator Bill Hansell, Gary Neal, Bill Elfering, Rod Skeen, Rosenda Shippentower, Dave Tovey, John Turner, Carla McClane, Carl Sheeler, Terry Tallman, Connie Caplinger, George Anderson, Larry Givens, Leann Rea, Ryan Neal, Jim Doherty, Bill Tovey, Don Russell, and past Executive Director Don Chance.

**Additional remarks from the Chairman Kim Puzey, “Today in a signing ceremony at the Pentagon in Washington D.C., the United States Army and the Columbia Development Authority memorialized the fourth largest closure and realignment in history and the largest transfer in twenty years.”**

Kim B. Puzey, CDA Chairman of the CDA and General Manager of the Port of Umatilla, thanked and congratulated all of the local authorities and military partners who have worked tirelessly on this project for over thirty years. Quoting from the Old Testament, Puzey said “Twenty-seven hundred years ago the Prophet Isaiah spoke of the future when he said”, ‘The nations... shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.’



Pictured L to R: The Honorable Rachel Jacobson and Greg Smith.





Pictured L to R: Lt. Gen. Kevin Vereen, Theodor Nettles, Peter Tubner, Richard Ramsell, Susan Ryan, Thomas Lederle, Andrew Napoli and Thomas Lineer. Pictured in the front row: The Honorable Rachel Jacobson and Greg Smith.

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