Environmental Engineers assess depleted uranium contamination cleanup efforts at the China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station in southern California's high desert.

Navy Seeks Innovative Solutions to Environmental Concerns

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The U.S. Navy is looking for innovative technologies that can be applied to the remediation of contaminated soils, sediments and groundwater at naval facilities. "We have an environmental responsibility," says Stephen Eikenberry, Director of Environmental Support Services at the Naval Facilities Engineering Service Center. "We need to keep our bases as clean as possible and meet the same environmental laws that everyone else has to meet. We're always looking for new approaches to solve problems. We don't have all the solutions. They come primarily from academia and industry."

The Navy has long been a supporter of the Soils, Sediments and Water Conference, which has earned a reputation as a showcase for the latest in environmental remediation technologies and practices. A number of pioneering decontamination methodologies, like in situ bioremediation of MTBE, were first demonstrated by Navy engineers and have been widely disseminated through the annual event. The Navy and the Conference have enjoyed a cyclical relationship, explains Eikenberry. "Navy people contribute papers and make technical presentations, but also attend the sessions to hear what others are doing. It's been a very productive partnership between the Navy and the Conference over the years," he said, "many relationships have stemmed from it."

In order to make sure that they're using the most effective site cleanup methods, the Navy solicits technology abstracts from private contractors and academic institutions. The Navy calls its Broad Agency Announcement for Innovative Environmental Technologies and Methodologies, "an innovative contracting vehicle providing solutions to the Navy's environmental concerns."

"It's also a way for small and medium-sized contractors to showcase their best technologies," says Eikenberry. Once the technology abstracts are evaluated by Navy engineers, those that pass muster are posted to the DENIX (Defense Environmental Network and Information Exchange) website so the Navy's site remediation project managers (RPM) can access them. If a technology looks like a good match for a site's remediation needs, the RPM requests a detailed proposal from the contractor. "We've identified a number of good technologies this way," Eikenberry notes. "The Broad Agency Announcement is a way to ensure that the Navy has access to the best, most effective leading–edge site remediation technologies available."

Kostecki with UMass Amherst Environmental Health and Science grad student, Mark Nascarella at China Lake.

By Loren Walker www.L2W.cc