



SEPTEMBER 2020

SITE HISTORY

The former Camp Wheeler is located in Bibb, Twiggs, and Jones Counties, Georgia. The camp was active during two separate instances for both World Wars. From 1917-1918, Camp Wheeler was used as a temporary training camp and mobilization center for National Guard units. In late 1940, it was opened again as an infantry training and replacement center. The camp consisted of a cantonment area, a maneuver area, and a main impact area. The impact area contained a variety of ranges where training with practice and high explosive munitions was conducted. Camp Wheeler was declared excess in January 1946, after which the property was returned back to original owners.

Project 05, R07H Benning Range—the subject of this fact sheet—is located roughly one mile west of Riggins Mill Road and is bisected by a power line corridor. The project area is comprised of 121 acres of a former range complex and impact area that featured numerous, overlapping training ranges. Presently, the land of Project 05 is used for recreation, hunting, and mining purposes.

ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

The former Camp Wheeler has been the subject of various environmental investigations since its closure in 1946. Between the mid-1950s and early 1970s, several searches for unexploded ordnance, and what was known as “de-dudding operations,” were completed. In 1991, the Corps conducted a Site Investigation to determine the absence and/or presence of unexploded ordnance on the former Camp Wheeler. A total of 60 unexploded ordnance items (one 37mm projectile, one 81mm mortar, and 58 60mm mortars) were recovered on the surface and sub-surface within the Project 05 area.

In 2000, the Corps completed an Archive Search Report (ASR) that helps document the history of Camp Wheeler, to include the munitions found during previous field activities and the munitions training and firing that occurred. The layout of the overlapping ranges and training areas included in the ASR is the basis for the additional fieldwork and investigations conducted. The ASR identifies five separate areas (A through E), that are later roughly defined as R01 through R07. Area A (later known as R07) is the former range complex and main impact area, which is where the Project 05 lands are situated.

Various site investigations, including historical records search, analysis of historic air photographs, an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis, Non-Time Critical Removal Actions, and a Remedial Investigation have been completed at the former Camp Wheeler to determine the presence of munitions and any contamination.

The Corps conducted a Remedial Investigation (RI) for much of the former Camp Wheeler,



FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES | Former Camp Wheeler: R07H Benning Range

which was finalized in 2015. The investigation allowed for the characterization of the nature and extent of munitions and explosives of concern (MEC) and munitions-related metals or other contaminants. Following the completion of the RI, the acreage investigated was delineated into more manageable project areas based on the findings.

Within the bounds of Project 05, munitions debris from 60mm practice and illumination mortars, 81mm practice mortars, and 37mm projectiles were found as part of the RI. While the RI was underway, the Corps also completed Non-Time Critical Removal Actions in two separate areas (the Power Line Corridor and Layfield property) within the former WWII range complex. Within the Power Line Corridor, over 300 high-explosive 60mm mortars were removed from within the boundary of Project 05. Soil and water samples taken in the vicinity of this project area indicate that there is no unacceptable risk to human health or the environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The preferred remediation plan for Project 05, R07H Benning Range is Subsurface Unexploded Ordnance Removal with Surface Clearance and Land Use Controls. This remedy consists of the physical removal of surface/subsurface munition related materials, using digital geophysical mapping technologies, as well as posting signage and educating the public of the hazards in the area. This remedy is currently underway and is scheduled for completion in 2026.

DOCUMENTS

All project documents can be viewed at the Washington Memorial Library in Macon, Georgia.



SAFETY FIRST: Remember the 3 Rs

Because of how the military used the site, there could potentially be buried munitions in portions of the Former Camp Wheeler, R07H Benning Range. These could be dangerous and may not be easily recognizable. Never touch, move, or disturb something you think may be a munition. Remember the 3 Rs: Recognize, Retreat, Report.

Recognize: The item you found could be dangerous. **Retreat:** Do not touch it in any way, and leave the area.

Report: Call 911 immediately.



For More Information

Documents are available at the
Washington Memorial Library
1180 Washington Ave., Macon, GA 31201
Telephone: 478.744.0800

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Savannah District
100 West Oglethorpe Avenue
Savannah, GA 31401

