



June 2023 | Issue 25

*Keeping residents informed of cleanup activities*

### NEXT NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be released in September 2023.

### VISIT OUR WEBSITE

<https://www.ellsworth.af.mil/About-Us/Environmental/>

View the following:

- Past newsletters
- PFAS Updates
- Presentations
- Public announcements

### CONTACT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Administrative Record Website

<https://ar.afcec-cloud.af.mil/>

- From the “Installation List” on the left, scroll down and select “Ellsworth AFB, SD” (for Ellsworth) or “Badlands AFR, SD” (for the Air Force Retained Area of the Former Badlands Bombing Range)
- If you know the AR number enter it next to “AR #” and click “Search”
- Click on the eye icon to open
- Numerous other search blocks can be used

## Air Force Partners with Oglala Sioux Tribe to Jointly Manage Air Force Retained Area of the Former Badlands Bombing Range

The former Badlands Bombing Range is located within the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The 341,719-acre range was acquired by the U.S. War Department in 1942 for military training during World War 2. A majority of the land was acquired by purchase or condemnation of private property. According to a 1981 Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) report, 125 to 130 families were permanently displaced before winter 1942.

Most of the former Badlands Bombing Range was returned from 1948 to 1977. The Air Force retained 2,486 acres now known as the “Air Force Retained Area” (see *reverse for location*) due to unexploded ordnance (UXO) remaining from its use as an artillery range by the S.D. Army National Guard in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Air Force Retained Area is remote land controlled by Ellsworth AFB, though it has been the longstanding mutual goal of the Air Force and OST (formalized in the 2008 Tribal Consultation Plan [AR # 6595]) to return ownership of the land.

Numerous UXO removals were completed in the past. The most recent was completed in 2011 by qualified UXO Technicians under contract to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Following the 2011 Removal Action, there is no known or suspected UXO in surface soil (less than 2 feet) at the Air Force Retained Area. However, the potential exists for UXO to be present in subsurface soil and along the White River escarpment.

There is currently no legal mechanism to transfer the land directly to the OST. In accordance with Public Law 90-468, if the Air Force surrendered the land it would be

transferred to the Department of Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). In an August 17, 2016 letter (AR #8453), the BIA declined to accept the land due to potential environmental liability and suggested legislative action to allow the property to transfer directly to the OST.

The 2020 Record of Decision (AR #8643) documented the selected remedy to address UXO hazards at the Air Force Retained Area. The selected remedy is land use controls with approved surface uses (cattle grazing, OST cultural activities, and hunting or other recreational uses).

Although the original goal of returning the Air Force Retained Area has not yet been realized, the Air Force provides funds to the OST’s Badlands Bombing Range Department to co-manage land use controls and to educate the public on UXO safety.

Additionally, Ellsworth AFB is currently working to develop a grazing plan with the goal of co-managing the natural resources with the OST.

For further information about the Air Force Retained Area, see the Administrative Record (see *instructions on the left*).



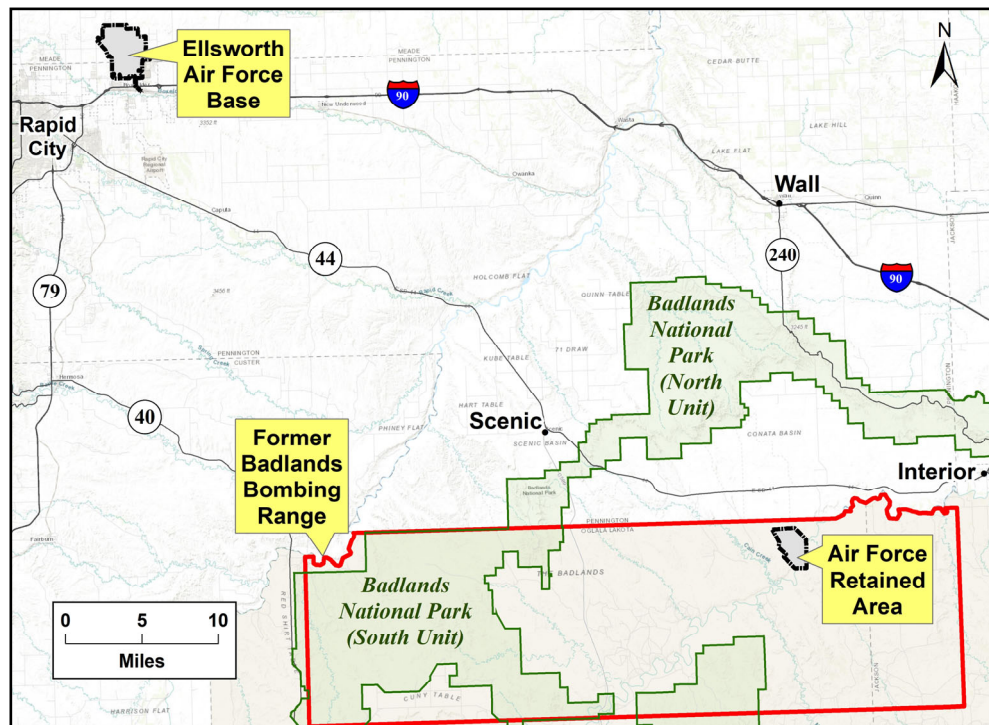
Coloring books teach children the “3Rs” of UXO safety: Recognize, Retreat, Report.

## New Waterline Update

On May 18, 2023, the Air Force signed the 2023 Action Memorandum, documenting the decision to build a water distribution system. The system will provide water to PFAS-impacted properties in Areas A and B as well as the Southwest Waterline.

The plan includes a new distribution system supplied with water by Rapid City and operated by Box Elder.

The 2023 Action Memorandum is AR #8799 on the Administrative Record website (see sidebar on the reverse for instructions).



Location of the Air Force Retained Area of the Former Badlands Bombing Range.

## EPA Wants to Hear from You!

An EPA contractor, Skeo, is conducting a Technical Assistance Needs Assessment (TANA) to identify whether the community surrounding Ellsworth AFB may require additional support to understand technical information about environmental

clean-up issues and participate meaningfully in the Superfund decision-making process.

Skeo staff will be in Box Elder July 12-13, 2023, to speak with members of the community about technical assistance resources and community

needs.

To participate in an anonymous TANA interview, please contact Saul Talamantes at:

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