Taiwanese native fulfills career goal, now manages cleanup of Main Base

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Seasoned program manager takes over Main Base cleanup

A transplant from Taiwan, Julia Tseng has settled into her position as a program manager for the remediation team at Edwards Air Force Base, California, fulfilling a longtime career goal. Tseng's passion for environmental remediation motivated her to transfer from Edwards to Travis Air Force Base, California, where she was a program manager in the environmental compliance field for 12 years.

“I have always wanted to be in restoration,” Tseng said. “To accomplish that, I knew I needed to go back to school.” Before arriving in the United States, Tseng earned a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering.

Tseng's determination and hard work paid off because she is now managing a multitude of cleanup projects at Edwards. Currently, Tseng oversees the cleanup of Operable Unit 1/8 Main Base, a group of emerging contaminants-known as perfluorinated compounds and a petroleum site whose cleanup is funded by the Defense Logistics Agency.

Covering a significant footprint, OU1/8 Main Base includes nearly 200 occupied buildings and 100 unoccupied buildings. "More than 900 groundwater monitoring wells have already been installed in OU1/8 to monitor the groundwater contamination," Tseng said.

Groundwater contamination at OU1/8 is a result of historical aircraft testing and maintenance activities that used fuels, oils, cleaning solvents, paints and other chemicals. Buildings and facilities include hangars and shops equipped for maintenance, repair, rebuilding and testing of engines, aircraft and all their components; administration buildings; hazardous waste storage; an aircraft paint booth; a photography laboratory; and an automotive hobby shop.

My goal is to issue a draft Feasibility Study addendum for OU1/8 Main Base by 2022," Tseng said. “We have been working with the regulatory agencies since 2017 to address their concerns on different components that will feed the addendum. Taking the time now to resolve potential conflicts will ensure we have all the necessary pieces to gain regulatory concurrence on the Feasibility Study addendum.”

In addition to OU1/8, Tseng manages a program for emerging contaminants that belong to a class of synthetic fluorinated chemicals. Known as perfluorooctanoic sulfonate, perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOS/PFOA for short, the contaminants were used in a variety of industrial and consumer products nationwide. One such application for PFOS/PFOA included legacy aqueous film forming foam or AFFF commonly used in firefighting efforts. A Site Inspection phase at Edwards identified 24 AFFF sites, and two of the sites underwent an expanded SI to determine whether there were any complete pathways to drinking water receptors. A draft report on the expanded SI effort was submitted to the regulatory agencies for review and their comments are expected by the end of July. A total of 22 AFFF sites, including two expanded SI sites, will undergo a future Remedial Investigation to determine the nature and extent of contamination.

Tseng also covers Site 31, a former bulk petroleum fuel storage facility located within OU1/8 Main Base. In 1996, a pipeline rupture resulted in leaking jet fuel, causing groundwater contamination at Site 31. Site 31 is handled separately from OU1/8 Main Base because it is a petroleum-only site and cleanup is funded by the Defense Logistics Agency.

For Tseng, one of the best aspects of her job is “being able to get out in the field and see my sites in person,” she said. “When you are looking at maps all day, it’s nice to leave the office and explore all that you have been working on. It’s important to get out in the field and become familiar with your sites because it gives you a front row seat to the progress each site has been making.”

Tseng's eagerness for hands-on management in the field is understandable given that she is a nature enthusiast. “I have a strong adoration for nature and being out in the wilderness,” she said. “Sightseeing and hiking are among some of my favorite hobbies.” In addition to taking opportunities to visit her cleanup sites, Tseng also enjoys walking many of the beautiful trails on Edwards during her personal time. An avid hiker, Tseng does not limit herself to the local area. Part of her extensive hiking background includes visiting a new state park every year. A goal-oriented person, she is already making plans for her next hiking trip — this time to Sequoia National Park, located in the southern Sierra Nevada and east of Visalia, California.

When she is not planning her next hiking venture, Tseng enjoys seeing the rest of the world. Most recently, she invited six family members from mainland China to join her and her husband on a tour excursion of Australia. Their adventure consisted of exploring the Great Barrier Reef, touring the Sydney Opera House and flying to the middle of the country to visit Uluru — a large sandstone rock formation sacred to the local Aboriginal people. “Visiting Uluru was my absolute favorite part of the trip to Australia,” Tseng recalled. “We were there during the full moon and there was no light pollution, the night sky was like a blanket of stars. It was truly a memorable experience.”

It comes as no surprise that Tseng's passion lies in environmental remediation as she has a natural appreciation for the environment. Her drive to explore the earth and hike its natural beauty has motivated her to accomplish her goals by taking steps toward cleaning the environment.
The Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) is made up of appointed representatives from communities on and around Edwards Air Force Base, regulators from federal and state agencies and base officials. The board's purpose is to provide a forum for two-way communication between the public and those responsible for environmental cleanup at the base.

The board meets semiannually, rotating meeting locations among communities surrounding the base. The public is welcome to attend. Those who have questions or concerns about cleanup activities at Edwards may contact any RAB member or Gary Hatch, 412th Test Wing Public Affairs, at (661) 277-8707.

The RAB also has its own Facebook site: www.facebook.com/RAB.Edwards. "Like" us on Facebook today!

RAB Members

OFF-BASE COMMUNITIES

Boron
Vacant—If you live or work in Boron, you may apply to be a public representative.

California City
Alexis Svejda
info@californiacitychamber.com
(760) 373-8676

Lancaster
Raj Mathi
rmath@cityoflancasterca.org
(661) 723-6019

Mojave
Victor Yaw
vicyaw@yahoo.com
(661) 754-1641

North Edwards
Vacant—If you live or work in North Edwards, you may apply to be a public representative.

Rosamond
William Gaddis
william.gaddis@us.af.mil
(661) 965-7771
(661) 277-3387

ON-BASE COMMUNITIES

Housing
Nicole Bradley
nickybee2020@gmail.com
(661) 275-8850
Alternate: David Solts
david.solts@us.af.mil
(850) 380-8096

Main Base Test Wing
Otto Zahn
otto.zahn@jsf.com
(661) 277-3174

NASA Armstrong
Vacant—If you work at NASA Armstrong, you may apply to be a public representative.

North Base
Vacant—If you work at North Base, you may apply to be a public representative.

South Base
Vacant—If you work at South Base, you may apply to be a public representative.

Air Force Research Laboratory
Joe Mabry
joseph.mabry@us.af.mil
(661) 857-6289

Remedial Project Managers

California Department of Toxic Substances Control
Kevin Depejs
kevin.depejs@dtsc.ca.gov
(916) 255-6547

Bruce Lewis
bruce.lewis@dtsc.ca.gov
(916) 255-6576

Edwards AFB
Paul Schiff
paul.schiff@us.af.mil
(661) 277-1469

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board
Alonzo Poach
alonzo.poach@waterboards.ca.gov
(760) 241-7365

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Richard Francis
francis.richard@epa.gov
(415) 972-3342
Judy Huang
huang.judy@epa.gov
(415) 972-3681