



TEST AREA n°7

Former Soesterberg Air Base, The Netherlands



Type of contaminants

Per- and Poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), Aqueous film forming foam (AFFF), hydrocarbons.

Special focus

The special focus is to develop a long-term sustainable strategy for the area, improving soil and ecosystem health and lowering risks, without massive interventions and financial inputs.

Ambition for the end of the project

Provide information for the development of financial models for decontamination and reuse of land and validate the outcome. Provide information for the development of optimal strategies for (i) the prioritization of soil remediation in Europe in urban and rural areas and (ii) the promotion of sustainable decontamination and reuse. Validation of the outcomes.

Ambition beyond the project

Development of long-term strategies including financial and spatial planning instruments for Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CEC) contaminated sites. Application of low-cost measures to improve soil health in north-western Europe.

Scale

5.2 km², used as a (military) air base since 1910. The area is open and has slight slopes and is surrounded by forest and heathlands. About 25% of the airbase consists of paved surfaces. The two runways make up the bulk of this soil sealed area. In addition, there are more than 100 buildings at the air base. The area not only accommodates natural values but is also an important part of the Ecological Network in the Netherlands.

Current status of test area

In 2009 a redevelopment plan was drawn up combining different functions of the area: housing, military area, nature reserve, recreation and airbase for gliders. The ambition of the municipalities involved and of the Province of Utrecht was to strive for sustainable redevelopment. Soil analyses showed the presence of landfills and contamination with hydrocarbons (due to leakage of fuel storage), unexploded explosives and PFAS (AFFF, due to firefighting training).



These contaminants pose a potential risk for the quality of the underlying aquifer, which is used for drinking water extraction. While the aforementioned contamination restricts soil functions, the presence of perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) in the soil contributes to a further restriction in the execution of the housing plans and could pose a future risk for drinking water resources.

The former Soesterberg Air Base is pictured above.