

If you've ever wanted to be more involved with environmental cleanup issues at Mountain Home AFB, the Air Force is offering that chance by becoming a member of its Restoration Advisory Board, or RAB.

On Thursday, October 18, at 7 p.m., the base will be holding an open house at the Mountain Home public library, 709 N. 10th Street. The purpose of the meeting is to provide information about RABs and determine if enough interest exists to reconvene a RAB for Mountain Home AFB.

The RAB is a group sponsored by the Air Force that consists of representatives from local communities, governments, regulatory agencies and other organizations who may have an interest in the progress of environmental cleanup activities on the base. A RAB is typically co-chaired by a representative of the Air Force and a RAB member from the community.

The RAB's purpose is to provide the Air Force advice on the cleanup activities from the community's perspective. In turn, the Air Force provides RAB members information about the cleanup, which they can take back to their communities.

"RABs provide Air Force environmental managers a point of view that sometimes we lack," said Mark Loucks, who oversees cleanup programs at several bases in the region for the Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC). "We value their perspective and want to understand their concerns."

Representatives may come from those who live in the local community or who live or work on the base, itself.

"Since the base is several miles from the city of Mountain Home, our cleanup work doesn't directly affect many people off base," said Tom Kendall, who manages the cleanup program at Mountain Home AFB. "Most of our cleanup efforts are directed at on-base contamination," Kendall said.

Kendall said that with the large on-base residential population and workforce, he hopes people who work or live on base will take interest in participating on the RAB. "I would think people would be interested in knowing what was happening in their place of work or residence and how it could be affecting the water they drink or the air they breathe."

Loucks said he would welcome anyone who is interested in participating in the cleanup effort to be a part of the RAB. "Before we can implement a cleanup action, we must gather input from those affected by the action," Loucks said. "The RAB helps us to get that input early in the process, which makes for a better final decision."

Mountain Home AFB has had a RAB in the past, but due to a lack of attendance, meeting frequency decreased and eventually RAB meetings ceased, the last being in 2016. Loucks said that the Air Force requires bases without active RABs to gauge community interest every few years. "If people want to be involved," he said, "we're happy to start having RAB meetings again."

The Open House will include posters and printed information regarding RABs and how to get involved. Attendees are welcome to come any time between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. Representatives from Mountain Home AFB will be on hand to answer questions.