

Off Beat: The library is where it's at

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By Harold Kruger/Appeal-Democrat

It almost seems quaint when you read some public notice from a government agency that tells you to go to the library to read a full document.

Go to the library?

There's no doubt libraries are fine places, palaces to learning, places where you can find out a whole bunch of stuff.

Well, they used to be that, until the Internet came along and changed everything.

So it was kind of puzzling last month when Beale Air Force Base sent out a notification about a new round of cleanups proposed at the base.

These cleanups have been going on, it seems, for more than 20 years. Back in the day, when nobody much cared about the environment, the folks at Beale sort of made a mess of things. The military was that way.

There was a lot of toxic stuff being used and dumped everywhere.

Now it's time for the cleanups, which may last for another 10 years, or 20 years, and cost millions of dollars.

But don't worry if you live near the base or on the base. All is well. Hey, it's the military. What could go wrong?

But what really seemed odd about the latest notification was the very last part about how the public could review reports and feasibility studies associated with the cleanup project.

According to the notice from Beale, you could review the documents at the Yuba County Library or at the state Department of Toxic Substances Control, in Sacramento.

Just think about it: It's 2011, and you can go to the library to review a document.

Wow! Really?

There seems to be one stage missing in all of this: that Internet thing.

You know, you can actually post these documents on the Internet, and people can read them. They can save the drive — or walk — to the library, although they might need the exercise.

The state agency that is a partner in all this, DTSC, does have some Beale-related documents on its website, but you have to hunt around for them.

To be fair, last Monday, in a legal ad, there was a mention of the DTSC website, if you could decipher the directions.

Beale's website is quite informative, except on the issue of these cleanups, which have been going on for so long.

But remember, out at Beale they care.

They've even posted the "Drinking Water Consumer Confidence Report" from June.

Things are looking good, the document says, because at Beale, they "work around the clock to provide top quality water to every tap."

Just try not to remember all the stuff that was dumped there those many years ago.

Read more: <http://www.appeal-democrat.com/articles/library-110351-base-beale.html#ixzz1ZqZqTT7Q>