

Demolition begins on El Toro runways

Work at former military base signals start of Great Park development.

By JEFF ROWE

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

IRVINE • With a few punches from an excavator and a yank from a backhoe, pieces of Orange County's history were ripped out of the ground Friday morning.

An assembled crowd smiled.

The machines pulled up a section of El Toro's main runway, symbolically ending the decade-long fight over the fate of the former military base and the beginning of work on the Great Park, the planned mix of wilderness areas, athletic fields, museums, schools, houses and shops. At least \$100 million had been spent on the struggle over whether base ought to become a commercial airport.

Irvine City Council members watched the start of the work, as did many executives from Lennar Corp., which will be building a village on 2,289 acres on the north side of the old base. About 1,347 acres will be devoted to the public areas of what is collectively called the Great Park.

"This really is day one of the redevelopment and reimagination of this land," Irvine Mayor Beth Krom said.

It was a particularly special day for Bill Kogerman, a member of the Great Park Corp. board, a leader in the effort to defeat the airport proposal. "It's very nostalgic for me," said the retired Marine Corps pilot, motioning to a spot on the runway where he trained pilots to make simulated aircraft-carrier landings.

Breakup of the runways will begin in earnest in July. In the meantime, Denver-based Recycled Materials Co. will be poking the runways at various places to test for concrete depth and quality.

What they saw Friday looked good, said Mark Wachal, a principal with Recycled Materials.

Good concrete means better quality aggregate, as the marble-size pieces are called when they exit the crusher.

Lennar says it will use all of the aggregate as a base for roads, utility lines and buildings destined to be part of the Great Park.



BIG BREAK: Politicians, anti-airport activists and developers were on hand Friday as work started at El Toro.



PIECE OF HISTORY: Len Krasner, left, an anti-airport activist, shows off his souvenir from Friday's excavation.

Runway numbers

Total tons of concrete at El Toro: 3.5 million
Number of times it would fill Angel Stadium: 6
Depth of runway section lifted Friday: About 12 inches

Timeline

2007: Start of work on roads and utilities at the Great Park.
2008: Work under way on the athletic fields at the Great Park.
2009: Some initial parts of the park - such as the canyon, lake, amphitheater or botanic garden - are finished.
2010: Anticipated completion of the concrete recycling.
2011: Some elements of museum district in place.
2013: Projected time it will take to use all the recycled concrete.
2028: Build-out of the Great Park.
"Forever:" How long designer Ken Smith says new parts to the park will be added.