

Atlantic Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command

Status Report: October, November and December 2003

Former Navy Property, Western Vieques, Puerto Rico

This report provides the Technical Review Committee (TRC) with a status of on-going work at the Solid Waste Management Units and Areas of Concern (SWMUs and AOCs) on the former Naval Ammunition Support Detachment (NASD) property in western Vieques. The following is a summary of the activities completed in October, November and mid-December 2003, and the activities planned for completion for the next few months. (This report includes some of the information that had been planned for presentation at the November TRC meeting, which was not covered due to the changed format of the meeting.)

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

SWMU 4

The results of the Phase III Ordnance/Explosives (OE) field investigation, which was completed in July, will be integrated into a database and used to prepare maps showing the extent of UXO items at the site. The UXO Remedial Investigation (RI) report is underway and is planned for regulatory review in March 2004. After EPA and EQB have reviewed the report, a draft final report is expected to be ready for TRC and public review in July 2004.

During the three phases of field investigation, a total of 90 acres were surveyed. Approximately 23,700 buried metallic items (referred to as "anomalies") were identified within this 90-acre area, within the fenced-in area surrounding SWMU 4. Sixteen separate pits that had been used for open burning/open detonation (OB/OD) of ordnance were identified. The highest densities of buried metal items were found near the 16 OB/OD pits. The density of the buried metal items decreased significantly at a distance of greater than 1,600 feet from the OB/OD pits.

Approximately 7,500 (about 30 percent) of these metallic items were removed from the ground and inspected, to see if they were ordnance items, what type, and if they contained explosive hazards. About 15 - 20% of the metallic items removed were found to be ordnance items. The remaining items included: railroad spikes, fence wire, and remnants from the molasses industry. Over 95% of the ordnance items were small items, consisting of either 20-millimeter (mm) projectiles or small arms ammunition.

The munitions that were removed for inspection were destroyed by detonation with explosives in a covered pit. The scrap metal from the metal items removed and destroyed has been certified to be safe and free of energetic material (explosives). The scrap metal has been temporarily stored at Roosevelt Roads for final disposition.

Based on the findings of the OE investigation, a number of ordnance items remain on-site that could present a potential explosive safety hazard. The highest density of the ordnance items occurs in the immediate vicinity of the 16 OB/OD pits.

With the OE field investigation completed, a Draft Final Work Plan for proposed investigations of the environmental conditions at SWMU 4 is scheduled for regulatory review in February 2004. The environmental investigation and RI report preparation is expected to take about one year to complete.

Remedial Investigation (RI) for SWMU 6, SWMU 7, AOC H, and AOC J

The field work was conducted from August 11th through October 3rd. Preparation of the RI reports for each of the sites is underway. The Draft RI reports are planned for regulatory review by May 2004. After EPA and EQB have reviewed the reports, a Draft Final RI report will be released for TRC and public review later in the year.

Remedial Investigation for AOC E

The draft RI report for AOC E is being prepared and is planned for regulatory review by the end of January. Upon EPA/EQB review, a draft final report will be released for TRC and public review later in the year.

Site Management Plan

The Draft Site Management Plan (SMP) has been prepared for regulatory review. The Draft Final SMP is expected to be available for TRC and public review in February 2004. The SMP outlines the strategy and schedule for achieving the environmental cleanup of the 17 potentially contaminated sites identified on West Vieques. The SMP provides the following information:

- **Overall strategy for accomplishing cleanup objectives** - describes the environmental standards established by the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (EQB) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to carry out a site cleanup program that will protect human health and the environment, and maximize the future beneficial uses of the former NASD property.
- **Historical operations and current conditions summary** - describes the history and conditions of each of the 17 sites that are currently in various stages of investigation and also summarizes previous investigations completed at the 17 sites.
- **Document schedule updates** - provides the status of each individual site and the overall program, to allow the Navy, regulators and the community to track the schedules of individual documents.
- **Details on screening criteria** - summarizes the process for categorizing sites, to determine which sites are recommended for no further action, which sites need additional investigation, and which sites will require cleanup.
- **Summary of the current and future land use expectations** - summarizes the restrictions that are placed on the land, until the sites can be either cleaned up or it is determined that the sites will not require any further action. Additional details on the agreements reached between the Navy and the lessees are provided.
- **Schedules and Funding** - includes a schedule for allocation and planning of funding and technical resources by the Navy and regulatory agencies. This includes a schedule

for work planned through the entire cleanup process with document submittal schedules.

- **Complete list of references** that were utilized to define the status of the sites are cited in the SMP.

Public Information

The Navy's new quarterly newsletter is in its production phase and it is expected to be distributed among the community of Vieques during January 2004. It is intended to provide more regular updates for the community about activities on western Vieques. The scope of the newsletter will change, as appropriate, when (if) the eastern and western sides are listed as a single "facility" on the National Priorities List (NPL or "Superfund").

EQB's public hearing on the NFA document was postponed, at request of the public, from December 2003 to January 23, 2004. A document summarizing the results of the NFA Report has been prepared in English and Spanish. This summary is now available at the public information repositories and has been distributed to all those who received the NFA report.

To assist public understanding of the investigation and cleanup process, the Navy and CTC are jointly planning some changes in the community involvement program, including a series of workshops on the CERCLA regulatory process and on technical topics of interest to the community. The first workshop is expected to take place in late February or early March 2004.

CERCLA Technical Committee (CTC)

A CTC meeting was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on November 19 and 20, 2003. Representatives from LANTDIV, EPA-Caribbean Office, EQB, DOI, Special Commissioner for Vieques and Culebra, University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez, Management Edge, and CH2M HILL participated in the meeting.

Discussion items included:

- Site Management Plan Update - presenting upcoming schedules for the submittal of draft, draft final and final documents.
- EQB public hearing on the No Further Action Report - discussion of the process for presenting comments at the public hearing and providing additional written comments to EQB on the report.
- Update on AOC E - discussion of the investigation findings to be presented in the RI/FS Report and discussion of initial comments to be incorporated into the draft report.
- Update about the OE and environmental Investigation at SWMU 4 - presenting the initial findings from the completed OE investigation, and discussing proposed sampling locations to be included in the upcoming environmental Remedial Investigation.
- Overview of activities for Eastern Vieques - presenting an overview of the field activities that will be completed during January 2004.
- Department of Civil Engineering and Surveying, University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez investigations and activities in Vieques.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

- EQB will conduct a public hearing for the No Further Action Report on January 23, 2004.
- The next TRC meeting is tentatively planned for January 21, 2004. The agenda will focus on planning for changes in the community involvement program.
- Field work for the RCRA investigation of former waste disposal sites on eastern Vieques is expected to start January 5, 2004, and will last until the end of January. Activities will include split sampling at selected locations. This will allow two different laboratories, working for different parties (EPA and the Navy), to analyze samples taken from the same places. This process is intended to improve the public trust in the Navy's investigations, because EPA can evaluate the data independently to oversee the conclusions.
- A public workshop on the CERCLA process is being planned for late February or early March 2004.