

## MEETING SUMMARY

### RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD (RAB) FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION AND MUNITIONS RESPONSE PROGRAM

VIEQUES ISLAND, PUERTO RICO

MEETING NUMBER 20 - APRIL 30, 2009

JORGE'S ICE HOUSE – MARTINEAU NEIGHBORHOOD

*Note: This meeting summary is based on informal notes taken at the meeting. The notes are not intended as a verbatim transcript and everything that was discussed may not have been captured. If comments or additional notes are provided within 30 days of distribution of these minutes, those will be added as an attachment to this summary.*

#### CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOMING REMARKS

The meeting began at 6:20 pm. Kevin Cloe – Navy Co-chair welcomed the participants.

#### PRESENTATIONS

- I. **Waste Removal Action on West Vieques.** Madeline Rivera, Navy. See presentation for more details.
  - The objectives of the Remedial Action include: remove waste, debris, and scrap metal and contaminated soil found at 4 sites located on West Vieques; conduct human and ecological risk assessments after the removal is completed; determine if further action is needed for these four sites.
  - These sites are:
    - Solid Waste Management Unit (SWMU) 7 - Quebrada Disposal Site
    - SWMU 6 - Mangroves disposal area
    - Area of Concern (AOC) J - Former Operations Area Disposal Site
    - AOC R - Former Operations Area Disposal Site.
  - Summary
    - Total debris/ soil /garbage disposed at Vieques landfill
    - Scrap metal was taken to a recycling facility
    - Non Hazardous waste sent to Vieques landfill –2965.81 tons
    - Daily cover sent to Vieques landfill- 7,483.19 tons
    - Lead contaminated soil (from SWMU 6) was sent to landfill in mainland USA.- 20 cubic yards

## Discussion highlights:

- Jorge Fernández Porto (RAB member): Did you find live munitions in any of the waste removed? Madeline (Navy): No, all the items were inert items. Some of the munitions items we found we believe were used as decorative items like a display in a commander's office; we did not find live munitions.
- Jorge: Did you remove 10,000 tons of waste? Madeline: Approximately 10,000 tons of debris/soil /garbage were collected and disposed at Vieques landfill
- Jorge: Unfortunately I cannot attend the site visit scheduled for tomorrow, but I want to know if the waste material stockpiled at the sites is exposed to the weather? Madeline: We placed plastic underneath the pile and covered it with plastic which is secured in place with sand bags.
- During her presentation Madeline indicated that some soil at SWMU 6 was disposed of at the US mainland due to lead contamination. Stacie Notine (RAB member): Is the lead in soil affecting the wildlife in the lagoon? Felix López (USFWS). Lead has the tendency to bind to particles and does not move. Once it's removed it won't present an exposure problem.

Danny Rodríguez (EPA): We don't have the results for those samples yet; once the removal is complete at SWMU 6, confirmatory samples will be collected and the results evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the removal. If we find high lead concentrations that means removal may need to continue.

- Stacie: I have not seen information telling me that the regulators challenge the data or the methods the contractor uses. Should we have confidence in their data if EPA does not take any samples themselves? We have no confidence in the work being done. Danny: The results of these confirmatory samples will show us if the removal achieved its goals. We are waiting for the results.

## II. Munitions Response Update - Tim Garretson, CH2M HILL. See presentation for more details.

### Status of the Munitions Response Areas Removal - Through 10 April, 2009

- 18,676 Munitions of Explosive Concern (MEC) items have been removed; they no longer present a threat to anyone
- Over 13 million pounds of metal debris have been collected
- Almost 7 million pounds of scrap metal have already been processed and shipped to recyclers

Remote Vegetation Removal Evaluation. The Equipment and technical expertise was provided by the U.S. Army Humanitarian Demining Group to determine if their equipment would be appropriate for humanitarian demining operations in areas of the world where there was dense vegetation and difficult terrain. NAVFAC provided access and personnel to determine if this method of vegetation removal may be appropriate for areas of the former range that are heavily vegetated and have a high density of sensitive Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) items.

Initial observations after a field test: There is limited evaluation data available for this

technology; the equipment leaves a dense "mat" of cut vegetation which is not acceptable, nor safe for workers to enter and remove munitions; the system works well except for leaving dense vegetation behind. Also, there was a detonation of munitions within three hours of operating the equipment, damaging the vegetation cutting attachment. The Demining Group will evaluate if modifications or additional methods may solve the problem of cutting dense vegetation where sensitive munitions remain.

The Sub-surface Removal of MEC on Roads and Beaches I began this month (April).

#### **Discussion highlights:**

- **Jorge:** How much area did you cover with this technology? **Tim:** We worked the machine in 5 ft swathes for a total of about 200 ft; then turned the machine around to go pass through the area again but the detonation occurred within 3 hours after the evaluation was conducted in the un-cleared area damaging the cutting attachment.
- **Jorge:** Are you going to wait for a change in the design? **Tim:** The machine had to be shipped back for repair, at this point we are waiting to hear from the Army.
- **Stacie:** You said that you did not see the submunition that caused the explosion; did you identify what it was? **Tim:** We saw it on the video camera just after we did the cutting, just before we hit it.
- **Stacie:** You know that on the internet there are other products available for this, some are better. You should check them out.
- **Tim:** The Army Demining Group goes around the world doing this work and finding the best solutions for the specific sites, they are the world experts on this subject. **Stacie:** As a concerned person of the health of the community, I think you should not sit by and wait for someone else to find the equipment that we need here on Vieques.
- **Jorge:** Is the Live Impact Area, the only area where you can use this equipment? **Tim:** We are looking to use this equipment to address the live sub-munitions area. Other areas that remain to be cleared in the LIA are the lagoon areas and the areas that are very steep, which are difficult to clear. Some isolated areas we need to go back, because of water or other obstructions we encountered during the initial sweep. The areas remaining to be cleared are also wet and very steep; we would clear the wet areas if they dried up and we are trying to clear the steep areas but it is slow process.

### **III. Environmental Update - Brett Doerr, CH2M HILL**

Brett gave a summary of the Site Inspection/Expanded Site Inspection (SI/ESI) underway at 23 sites on east Vieques, showing photographs of the work being conducted. The field Work started in February and will last through May 2009. As part of this work soil and groundwater samples will be collected; monitoring wells installed; geophysics studies will be done (non-invasive subsurface evaluation) to identify subsurface features; test pit excavation; and debris and drum removal. The data will be evaluated to determine if there has been a release of hazardous constituents and, if so, whether the

levels warrant further investigation or action. We anticipate providing the SI/ESI Report to the RAB in early 2010.

**Discussion highlights:**

- Jorge: What kind of debris did you find at SWMU 1? Brett: a couch, tires, telephone wire, 2 drums with no obvious contamination (crushed), all representative of typical municipal waste. We also found some munitions related debris. We are sampling in and around and under the debris to determine if there have been any releases of contaminants.
- Stacie: Did you find any potential archeological sites? Brett: We did a study before work began and confirmed with SHPO that there are no known archaeological sites within the study areas. We did not come across any historical artifacts in those areas.
- Stacie: How many drums did you find at PI-7? Brett: Close to 200 drums, but most were crushed.
- Jorge: In Camp Garcia, there is an area that appears to be an old sugar cane storage warehouse. So we believe that in Camp Garcia there are historical artifacts. Brett: We confirmed that no archeological sites are present at the sites we are studying.
- Jorge: Do you know what was in the drums? Brett: Looked and smelled like tar; we sent a sample to the lab and results were 'deteriorated petroleum product'. Most likely the drums were used to transport asphalt for road repair activities.
- Lionel Sanchez (RAB member): Do you think this is not associated with the power station? Brett: I think it is likely associated with road work.
- Jorge: If there is no paved road nearby the site, why do you think the drum is associated with the asphalt? Brett: The runaway south of Camp Garcia was asphalt.
- Stacie: Who decides what is sampled for? Brett: For the majority of the sites, a full suite of analysis (VOCs, SVOCs, metals, pesticides, PCBs). However, in some cases we have historical data that allows us to target the analyses to those constituents historically detected.
- Danny: Who decide on what to collect? We follow CERCLA procedures for what analyses to be performed; the decisions are made by the Environmental Restoration Team, which includes the Navy and its contractors, EQB and its contractors, EPA and its contractors, and Fish and Wildlife.

**IV. Agencies Update. See presentation for details). Daniel Rodríguez/EPA and Wilmarie Rivera/EQB**

Activities:

Wilmarie and Daniel gave a summary of the regulatory activities from February 2009 to April 2009 which included Review of the Pilot Study for AOC E and AOC R and attending a RAB meeting. On April

28, 2009 the regulatory agencies participated in the Munitions Response Subcommittee meeting. On April 29, the agencies (EQB, EPA, NOAA FWS and the Navy) participated in the CERCLA Technical Meeting in San Juan. On April 30, EQB and EPA participated in the Environmental Subcommittee Meeting in USFWS office in Vieques.

### Document Review

The regulatory agencies have reviewed the following documents:

- Draft Final Site Inspection/Expanded Site Inspection, Sampling and Analysis Plan, 7 Consent Order Sites and 16 PI/PAOC Sites, Former Vieques Naval Training Range
- Draft Action Memorandum Non-Time Critical Removal Action in the Surface Impact Area, Former Vieques Naval Training Range
- ERA Protocol
- Confirmatory Sample Map for removal sites

### Inspections

In January, regulatory agencies participated in a site visit within the areas to be investigated as part of the Site Inspection/Expanded Site Inspection, Sampling and Analysis Plan, 7 Consent Order Sites and 16 PI/PAOC sites.

In March, regulatory agencies visited SWMU 7 – AOC R – AOC J -Landfill – SWMU 6 – PAOC X PI4 – AOC A – and the LIA

In April, the agencies inspected the work on AOC R –AOC J – PAOC L - PI 7 –SMWU 6- SWMU 7, SWMU 1

### Status of the Prescribed Burn Waiver Application:

The report of the public hearing conducted on September 24, 2008 was submitted to the Office of Public Hearings on January 23, 2009. The document has been reviewed by the Governing Board; the Board will issue a resolution in the next few weeks.

### MEC Management Plan for Vieques Island, Puerto Rico:

This topic was discussed during the Munitions Response Subcommittee meeting held on April 28, 2009. This meeting was attended by the following agencies: FBI, EPA, Navy, FWS and EQB. The agencies discussed merging the Navy protocol for federal lands with the protocol for public areas. The following agencies will receive training about the MEC protocol: Vieques Police, Firefighters, Civil Defense representatives, DNER and members of the community.

EQB continues to share information with the public through monthly flyers posted to the agency's website.

### Discussion Points:

- Question from a RAB member: So, if a munition is found on the refuge, the Navy contractors will not respond? Wilmarie: No - if munitions are found in public areas the Navy cannot respond. If the munitions are found at the refuge, then they do respond following the current protocol for those areas.

## **V. Agencies Update - Matt Connolly/USFWS**

Matt Connolly gave a summary of the current USFWS activities, including road closures and new species found in the refuge.

### **Discussion Points:**

- RAB member: Do you have any idea about the NOAA survey? Matt: Part of the study was offshore mapping, the work is completed and the map is being developed. Also, they did some soil sampling; after the data is analyzed a document that summarizes their findings will be produced. I know that the results of a fish study they did will be released.

### **CLOSURE:**

The meeting ended at 9:30 PM. The next meeting is planned for August 6, 2009.