



Vieques Investigation and Cleanup

Navy Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Atlantic

RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Number 38

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m., September 11, 2013, Multiple Use Center, Vieques, PR

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

Angela Carpenter – EPA	Omar Monsegué- USFWS
Kevin Cloe – Navy	Stacie Notine - RAB Member
Peggy Coates– Community Member	Myrna Pagán – Community Member
David Coates – Community Member	Tim Reilly – DRNA Consultant
Gerardo Cisneros - Community Member	Madeline Rivera – Navy
Carlos Diez – DRNA	Wilmarie Rivera – EQB
Geoffrey Garrison – EPA	Susan Silander – USFWS
Jorge Fernández Porto – RAB Member	José Sustache – DRNA
Rich Henry – USFWS	Gloria Toro – EQB
Luther Landrom – Community Member	Ramón Torres – EPA
Craig Lilyestrom – DRNA	Julio Vázquez - EPA
Fabián Martínez – Vieques Municipality	Dan Waddill – Navy
Colleen McNamara – Community Member	Brett Doerr – CH2M HILL
MaryKay McHoul - Community Member	John Martin – CH2M HILL
Doug MHoul- Community Member	Loyann Parker – CH2M HILL
Lirio Márquez - RAB Member	Susana Struve – CH2M HILL

Topics Discussed:

Susana Struve/Facilitator	<i>Welcome to Vieques Investigation and Cleanup NAVFAC Atlantic Restoration Advisory Board</i>
Dan Waddill/Navy	<i>Welcomes Participants Introduces representatives from NAVFAC, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (EQB); Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Department of Natural Resources (DRNA) and contractors (CH2M HILL).</i>
Rich Henry/USFWS	<i>Presents a brief description of Ecological Restoration Process, what it means, highlights restoration tools.</i>
Mike Barandarian/USFWS	<i>Presents the USFWS Plans to Restore the Eastern Conservation Area (ECA)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since this is delicate habitat, there's been doubt among the public with regard to the success of ecological restoration process. • Best restoration is not to destroy but to conserve. If cutting is needed, we should attempt to find means to minimize damage to natural resources. Will never be as good as what nature gave us in the first place. • Forests such as this one (ECA) take hundreds of years to develop. The idea is to

	<p>expedite the restoration process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify reasons for damage, eliminate offending causes, enhance restoration of normal system, monitor progress, and creatively manage. This is an ongoing process; will adapt according to results. • Will keep in mind species and natural ecological community to influence success. • To accomplish restoration, we must have realistic objectives. • Goal - Maintain and expand the protected areas, assist natural recovery, plant, and exercise invasive species control. • Invasion stages are arrival, establishment, reproduction, expansion, and dominance. • Much easier to establish vegetation where some plants and resources have been left behind, but we must keep invasive species from expanding their foothold. • ECA is approximately 120 acres (<i>shows map</i>). Red area represents dry levels, lagoon and vegetation. • Regions are subdivided into areas according to issues so that we can more effectively address each area's specific restoration needs. • By the next RAB, you will see more concrete plans. • We are trying to hire an expert in ecological restoration. Omar Monsegué, full time biologist with the Ecological Services Division of USFWS will be now providing technical support to the Vieques Refuge. • Working with other agency, Mr. Sustache, a great botanist from the Department of Natural Environmental Resources (DNRA). • By the next RAB meeting, you will see more concrete plans.
Lirio Márquez/RAB member	The species to be planted; are these commercial species?
Mike Barandiaran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some plants are available commercially, but there are variations in the species. Sea grapes are not available in the market, so we must find a way to collect the seeds. Some commercial seed varieties are not adapted to Vieques, so it's a waste of money to try to grow the seeds outside Vieques, and then introduce these plants. Seeds may need to be from Vieques, raised in a local greenhouse, grown to a size that will ensure they will thrive when planted in the area. • Botanists will advise further.
Rich Henry	Restoration recreates the structure of the environment and reestablishes natural processes. Our goal today is to provide a general description of the tools that may be used for restoration.
Jorge Fernández/RAB member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2010, when we visited the ECA we saw that there was no much vegetation left, other than some trees and palms. Almost an entire 120 acres were cut down, which opens the way for invasive plants. • Two years have passed and although no active restoration was done, the area seems to be restoring naturally. • I have no problem with USFWS' restoration proposal, but I would like to discuss bringing over species of the genus <i>Eugenia</i> which were previously present in that area; I haven't seen this plant in the ECA lately. • In reality, the situation's not as bad as I thought, but some things haven't been handled. Invasive species have not been taken out, and native plants have not been planted either. I understand that perhaps there are no seeds available for those species or that the conditions are not apt them to established, but we need to maintain constant vigilance and cannot allow 2 to 3 years to pass again. Without implementing more active management/restoration activities.
Rich Henry	Fortunately for the ECA, there was a one-time acute disturbance needed to remove the munitions to reduce the explosive risk; since then there have not been more disturbances (versus what would could happen with continued-long-term

	disturbances). This favors recovery of the vegetation. We will continue to monitor, adaptively manage, and so on.
Madeline Rivera/Navy	<p>Presents information about the <i>Vieques Community Involvement Plan (CIP) Update</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you for the continued participation of RAB member in the clean up process. • The current CIP was adopted in 2005. To understand the community concerns, CIPs are reviewed every five years. It is now time to revise the CIP for Vieques. • This time, the interview process will be done by representatives of several agencies, EQB, EPA and Navy: Geoffrey Garrison and Danny Rodriguez of EPA, Wilmarie Rivera and Gloria Toro of EQB, and Susana of CH2M HILL representing also the US Navy. • These 6 people will work the interviews, divided into 2 groups of 3 distributed in Isabel Segunda and in Esperanza. We are shooting for the week of October 20th. • We are reducing the length of the questionnaire we used before to make the process more effective taking into account the interviewees' available time. • We are making final revisions to the questions, ensuring they can represent the diverse groups of people in Vieques. • We will send the revised questionnaire to the RAB members.
Wilmarie Rivera/EQB	<p>Follows up with the drums <i>with materials transported from the Central Processing Center (CPC) that caused some community concerns</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The material inside the drums is not dangerous, has been certified to be free of explosives; mainly it was metal shards and pieces of fences and other debris that are not hazardous materials; nevertheless EQB understand the community concerns. • After the public expressed concern, EQB's personnel inspected the trucks removing the material and verified that the material is being shipped with the required permits.
Wilmarie Rivera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have been working with government officials (Navy, Puerto Rico, EPA, etc.) to prioritize areas for clean-up so that areas planned for public use can be expedited. • I will keep you informed of the areas that have been identified for expedited clean up.
Jorge Fernández Porto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Navy and contractors were putting munitions scraps and scrap metal into the oven to destroy the explosives contained in the munitions and the scrap; they examined each piece of metal for residue, and placed scraps into 55-gallon barrels until filled and then put them in a metal recycling area, after they were deemed safe. • The material was mainly steel but also aluminum. These materials do not pose any risk related to explosives, members of the community need to take this off our minds and allow the disposal of these materials outside the island so they can be recycled.
Jorge Fernández Porto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ During our last RAB meeting, we discussed the investigation at Blue Beach which at that time was ongoing. How did it end and where are we going from here?
Dan Waddill	<p>Presents a summary of the <i>Status for Blue Beach</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beach itself is 100% investigated. No munitions items on the beach, except for one item at the Far East end, so that area will remain closed to the public. • Other munitions-related items, such as small arms, trip flare, and rocket fuze, were found north of the beach. Given the past military activity that occurred in that area, that's what we'd expect to find. • The main Blue Beach area that is open to the public is safe.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Time Critical Removal Action (TCRA) Work Plan will start within the next 6 months in the area to the north and east of the beach.
Lirio Márquez	➤ Why are you barricading some areas?
Kevin Cloe	The barricade is actually a little further to the east to deter public access to the far eastern end of the beach, where a munitions item was found.
Dan Waddill	<p><i>Presents Current Information of the CCP Fires.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the last RAB meeting in June, fires of the CPC were still smoldering. The fire burned out naturally in July and we are in the process of removing the ash and burned debris. The CPC is within an area under investigation called UXO 4, so it will be investigated with that site.
Dan Waddill	<p><i>Presents a quick update on UXO-15 – Puerto Ferro Lighthouse.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Navy and regulatory agencies have been working on how we can expedite providing access to the lighthouse. We will provide status and schedule updates as they become available.
Kevin Cloe	<p><i>Presents a summary of SWMU 1, the old Camp Garcia landfill.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially, we were in the process of cutting transects to identify the small amounts of debris on the landfill surface. The plan was to add a 2-foot soil cover to the small debris areas, but during transects, we found much more exposed trash than we anticipated, so we changed our approach. Instead of cutting transects, we are in the process of cutting vegetation over entire landfill so that all surface debris can be removed and we can do a geophysical survey of the area so that we can refine the area of the landfill that will receive the 2-foot soil cover. We will update at next RAB meeting.
Member of the public	➤ Will there be new sampling?
Kevin Cloe	There will be sampling in accordance with the long-term monitoring plan.
Member of the public	➤ What kind of time frame for the long-term monitoring? 5 years? 1 year?
Brett Doerr	Initially it will be annual sampling. At the first 5-year review, we will determine whether the frequency of monitoring will be increased or decreased.
Lirio Márquez	➤ Has the monitoring started yet?
Brett Doerr	No, it has not yet started. It will start after the soil cover is installed on the landfill.
Lirio Márquez	➤ Where is the dirt going to come from?
Kevin Cloe	We are still trying to determine the source.
Member of the public	➤ Will vegetation be added to stabilize?
Kevin Cloe	That's being taken into consideration as a natural buffer as well as erosion control fencing.
	<i>Other questions from the public</i>
Myrna Pagán/ Community Member	➤ Have you started the underwater investigations?
Kevin Cloe	Underwater investigations have been going on for a while.

Brett Doerr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To date we have compiled all the bathymetry data around the island. This data shows the depth of the bottom of the ocean around the island. The information is important for planning the next phases of investigation, including side-scan sonar, which is planned for early next year. The side-scan sonar will tell us about underwater obstructions such as coral reefs, etc, so that we don't damage the natural environment while looking for munitions. By spring, we will have information gathered from the side-scan sonar. The data will be used to develop a Work Plan to evaluate the presence and distribution of underwater munitions.
Dan Waddill	There are a couple of underwater areas that we are prioritizing. The area offshore of SWMU 4 on the western end is a priority since part of SWMU 4 is planned for public access. We've already had divers in the water in that area and plan to continue that investigation in the near future. Another area is the around Cayo La Chiva because it is near Blue Beach.
Myrna Pagán	➤ Have you already contracted someone for the side-scan sonar?
Brett Doerr	Not yet, but we're in the process of doing so. We will have someone in place by the next RAB meeting.
Myrna Pagán	➤ Is the scanning the first step? And then we prioritize?
Dan Waddill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wide area assessment, 15,000 acres, takes several steps. We have to see the sea floor to locate munitions items taking care not to disturb the endangered coral/reef. We are working with EPA, PREQB, and USFWS to determine priorities. The time frame for side-scan sonar is the next few months; other steps to follow. We will be constantly doing something underwater over the next few years.
Myrna Pagán	➤ Is there an internet site for reference for finding updates on progress?
Dan Waddill	Yes, we have one, but the current website is being updated and moved to a new location. We will send out the web address in the next month or so, as soon as it becomes available. In the meantime, the current website is still available.
Member of the Public	➤ Are the beaches safe for our children?
Dan Waddill	Yes, the public beaches are safe, but there are restricted beaches.
Public	➤ Are the restricted beaches barricaded to keep people out?
Dan Waddill	Yes, there are locked gates and signs posted in all restricted areas.
Member of the Public	➤ What about Green Beach?
Dan Waddill	Green Beach is safe and open to the public.
Member of the Public	➤ Is there anything to keep people from snorkeling in the water in restricted areas?
Kevin Cloe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are making every effort to notify the public and detour access to the restricted areas. We have installed kiosks near beach areas with information about the dangers posed by munitions; we believe this is the most effective tool to keep people informed regarding safe and unsafe areas. Fences won't work for people intent on being in restricted areas. We have placed buoys and restrictive signs out there. People should not swim

	<p>inside the boundary marked by the buoys. The beach area is safe and the water at Blue Beach is safe.</p>
<p>Member of the public</p>	<p>➤ With regard to the island at Blue Beach, wasn't something found there a year ago?</p>
<p>Dan Waddill</p>	<p>Yes, items were found there. The items on land were disposed of, but there are still munitions items in the water, which is one of the areas planned for expedited cleanup. There are no safety hazards for people at Blue Beach.</p>
<p>Susana Struve</p>	<p>Closing Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underwater plans and progress to be added to the agenda of each RAB meeting • Provide new Navy web site link with information about restricted areas • Send RAB members CIP update questionnaire • Inform the public about the public meeting to present the Proposed Plans for AOC I and AOC E planned for November.