



Vieques Investigation and Cleanup Navy Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Atlantic

RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Number 42

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., August 21, 2014

Multiple Use Center, Vieques, Puerto Rico

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

Mark Martin - Vieques Conservation & Historical Trust	Susan Silander – US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS)
John Stoklosa – Community Member	Mike Barandiarán – USFWS
Gerardo Cisneros – Community Member	José C. Font – EPA - Caribbean Environmental Protection Division (CEPD)
Angela Carpenter – US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Chief of Special Programs	Dan Waddill – NAVFAC Atlantic
Colleen McNamara – Community Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Member	Daniel Hood – NAVFAC Atlantic
Stacie Notine – Community RAB Member	Madeline Rivera – NAVFAC Atlantic
June Landrum – Community Member	Wilmarie Rivera – Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board
Luther Landrum – Community Member	Madeline Almodovar – CH2M HILL
Linda La Violette– Community Member	John Martin – CH2M HILL
Ronnie Fields – CH2M HILL	Lora Pride – CH2M HILL
Geoffrey Garrison – EPA – Public Affairs Division (PAD)	Linda Myers – CH2M HILL
Daniel Rodríguez – EPA	

Topics Discussed:

Madeline Almodovar (Facilitator)	<p>Opening</p> <p>The meeting began at 5:30 p.m. with a welcome to the Vieques Investigation and Cleanup NAVFAC Atlantic Restoration Advisory Board and community attendees.</p>
Dan Waddill (Navy)	<p>Introduction</p> <p>The Navy has four topics for presentation tonight. Everyone will have the opportunity for questions during and after the presentation. The topics include updates on UXO 15 Interim Actions, Playa La Chiva/PAOC EE Interim Actions, Laguna Anones Sampling, and the Beach Dynamics Investigation. These updates will be followed by regulatory updates.</p>

Dan Waddill (Navy)	<p>1. UXO 15 Interim Action Update</p> <p>Public access to the area around the historic lighthouse on Puerto Ferro is one of the highest priorities according to feedback from Fish and Wildlife and the Commonwealth. To date, the road to the lighthouse has been resurfaced and munitions clearance has been performed around the lighthouse, the adjacent beach, and a planned parking area that will be maintained by Fish and Wildlife. The Navy has also installed signs along the road to keep people on the road and away from the surrounding areas where cleanup work is still occurring.</p> <p>Fish and Wildlife is working on safety issues associated with the condition of the lighthouse, but the Navy's work to allow access to the area around the lighthouse has been completed so Fish and Wildlife can determine when to open the area for public access. Since there was no record of the Navy using munitions in this area, as was expected no munitions items of concern were found at the site. The Navy is now in the process of writing up the report of these activities at UXO 15.</p> <p>As mentioned previously, warning signs have been installed to keep visitors on the road and beach and out of areas that are still under investigation. The Navy also installed a couple of informational kiosks that will have display maps and other educational information, including safety information.</p>
John Stoklosa (Community Member)	Approximately when will the area be opened?
Susan Silander (USFWS)	We hope to have the site open in a few months. However, the interior of the lighthouse, a couple of cisterns, and the edge of the cliffs will remain closed for the safety of visitors. Guided tours will be able to start once the site is open. The area from the gate to the road will be open by the end of the year and a large sign will be installed to notify individuals what area will be restricted and what will be accessible.
Community Member	At the base of the lighthouse, when you go through Puerto Ferro, there is a little mangrove area there with a little birding lagoon. Is it safe to go there and to bird there?
Mike Barandiarán (USFWS)	There are two lagoon areas on that side of the main road, there are some salt flats there. The Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust, by special permit, is now providing guided tours in that area. The other lagoon is currently off limits since it has not yet been cleared.
Stacie Notine (RAB Member)	Does the site document report that Fish and Wildlife will be in charge of EOD/UXO (Explosive Ordnance Disposal/Unexploded Ordnance) removal?
Dan Waddill (Navy)	I can assure you that the Navy will be in charge of all munition's work.
Susan Silander (USFWS)	I don't see the information you [Stacie] refer to in the document text, but just to clarify, I assure you that the Navy will be doing all of the UXO/EOD removal work.
Daniel Hood (Navy)	<p>2. Playa La Chiva/PAOC EE Interim Action Update</p> <p>As most of you know, about a year and a half ago a few munitions showed up on La Chiva beach, which was at the time open to the public. We have since shut down the area and initiated a full surface and subsurface clearance. We are looking for an October completion time for this work. The Navy has and will continue to work with all of the agencies, National Marine Fisheries, Fish and Wildlife, and DNER throughout the site clearance.</p> <p>The sea turtle nesting zone was treated as a separate area to ensure minimal disturbance to potential nests. Applicable personnel working in this site attended Nesting Monitoring Training conducted by Fish and Wildlife. Fish and Wildlife informed us that native trees had been planted in the area, so we have preserved as many of the native species as possible by working around plants and removing only invasive species where possible. Thirty items were found to date. We found what we expected to find and also removed tons of debris from the site. The effort has been a careful and coordinated effort between all involved agencies.</p>
Stacie Notine (RAB Member)	In this carefully coordinated effort, will there also be a site-specific plan developed and issued in a separate report concerning the location and the actual debris and UXO removed from there?
Daniel Hood (Navy)	A stand-alone biological assessment was conducted prior to initiating any action at the site with appropriate agencies providing input and review. The biological assessment is in the Administrative Record. This is a publically available document.
Stacie Notine (RAB Member)	You found drums at the site?

Daniel Hood (Navy)	Yes, we found two drums buried in the sand; we photographed their location, sampled the contents and removed them. The drums contained waste oil.
Stacie Notine (RAB Member)	(Referring to the NOAA document in which NOAA reported on sampling for pesticides in different lagoons). The reason I am asking about drums is that there is a great deal of concern about the drums and what they contain, like herbicides and pesticides. Over 200 of the drums have been located in PI 7. These drums remain in the lagoon. Do you know what happened to the drums you found in PI 7? Will you act on the drums even though it isn't required by CERCLA or RCRA?
Daniel Hood (Navy)	In reference to the NOAA document you are asking about, we did an investigation and sampling of the La Chiva Lagoon. The information does not suggest the drums found in the lagoon contained pesticides or herbicides. In fact, only low levels were found in the lagoon. With respect to PI 7, those drums contained tar (believed to be leftover drums associated with asphalt road construction or maintenance. All of those drums, as well as associated soil, were removed.
Madeline Almodovar (Facilitator)	If you are having trouble locating any of the documents, you can find them at the website. Information about the website is located on the flyer in the back of the room. If you need hard copies, please let us know.
John Stocklosa (Community Member)	The Cayo La Chiva slide did not show blue (on the slide), does that mean the island hasn't been cleared?
Daniel Hood (Navy)	We have surveyed the island. All of the known munition items on the island have been removed. There are still items in the water around the island. We are actively developing a work plan now for their removal and are working on the feasibility study to determine what the final remedy for the island will be. I will be going out to the island with DNER next Tuesday for a site visit.
Mark Martin (Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust)	I remember the NOAA study where they found incredibly high levels of DDT in the lagoon. You did a full investigation, but I didn't hear a final result.
Daniel Hood (Navy)	We did sediment sampling for the entire lagoon, including where NOAA had previously sampled, and did not find high pesticide concentrations. In fact, the data from the recent investigation found no unacceptable risk associated with the lagoon sediments. Based on these findings, a no action decision document is anticipated to be signed by all agencies in September 2014.
Mark Martin (Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust)	Do you have a rough estimate of how many items you found around the island?
Daniel Hood (Navy)	We found nine items in the water around the island, which were the same type of items found on the island.
Dan Waddill (Navy)	<p>3. Laguna Anones Sampling Update</p> <p>The lagoon is a subject of concern for the public because of the perception that it was contaminated and perhaps open to the ocean. So, we conducted a site visit and will be giving an update on what work the Navy will be doing with regulatory agencies. As you can see from the photo (on screen), the area was heavily impacted with munitions. The lagoon is not open to the ocean because sand blocks the lagoon outlet. Our sampling efforts included surface water and sediment sampling. The work that was conducted here is part of a very large remediation investigation for thousands of acres on the east end. Laguna Anones is just a piece of that investigation.</p> <p>We sampled areas for likely contaminants looking downgradient of heavily-impacted areas (any areas where contamination could have occurred). Working with other involved agencies, we determined the most likely areas for sampling, though sampling was initially delayed because there was very little water in the lagoon. Once underway, we looked for explosives and inorganic contaminants. No explosives were detected in the surface water or sediment samples. That might be an unexpected finding to the community, though similar results have been found at ranges across the country where similar activities have taken place (when munitions explode the explosive chemicals are consumed). We are still working with regulatory team to review inorganic results and also working to resolve the broader investigation of which this is part. We expect to issue the report of findings in February.</p>

John Stocklosa (Community Member)	We once talked about a burn plan. Where does that stand?
Daniel Waddill (Navy)	The burn plan was really for an area further northeast where there is a heavy concentration of sub-munitions. That burn plan has been in regulatory review for a number of years and so the burn has been on hold. We are currently looking for alternatives to this plan to address the sub-munitions area.
Mark Martin (Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust)	How large is the sand blockage on the lagoon and what is the height off the lagoon?
Daniel Hood (Navy)	The area is 50 to 100 feet wide (about the width of this room) and tops 2 ½ to 3 feet at the highest point.
Mark Martin (Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust)	I recommend some monitoring of what they have measured in the past and monitoring during high and low tides. Is the area opened (to the ocean) at some times?
Dan Waddill (Navy)	The space between the lagoon and the ocean could be opened in unusual circumstances, like during hurricanes. However, it is not normally opened. The vegetation appears to indicate that it hasn't been opened for a quite a long time.
Daniel Hood (Navy)	This area is used as a road and has been for a long time. This is our only road to get out to this area for study without going all of the way around.
Stacie Notine (RAB Member)	It seems like there has been a lot of concern from the photographs about all of the bombs in that area. Scientifically we should know what it is in and what can be done with it.
Mike Barandiarán (USFWS)	In terms of what it contains – everyone has the same concerns, that is to scientifically determine what the lagoon contains and in what levels (concentrations) and to look at how it could affect human health. Up to this point, no one has done a study to determine what is there. NOAA did some work with land crabs and fiddler crabs in the area and did not find that those organisms had any contamination. This study the Navy is conducting is brand new information and we are eager to hear the results. This lagoon like others in Vieques, will open and close due to the season. This one was open in 2004 during Hurricane Jeanne, at the time Tropical Storm Jeanne, and the area was flushed.
Dan Waddill (Navy)	We do need to move on. But to conclude, we just wanted to give you a brief update on what we have found so far. We are investigating the entire lagoon and the area around it with our project team. For now, this is an update of where we are. We do realize that there are outstanding questions that will need to be answered in the future.
Madeline Almodovar (Facilitator)	How can community members get questions to you?
Dan Waddill (Navy)	You can talk with us at the break, write down your questions and give those to us and you can also contact us by email. You are welcome to be in touch with us in any of those ways.
Daniel Hood (Navy)	<p>4. Beach Dynamics Investigation Update</p> <p>We are starting a beach dynamic study. We have about 26 miles of beaches that we need to clear. We initially spent three years doing subsurface clearance on the beaches and then we went out to remap them and found that a lot of the anomalies had come back, either due to new anomalies coming on shore or due to changes in sand elevation exposing deeper anomalies.</p> <p>Because sand moves, there can be sand on the beach some days and none on other days. CH2M HILL brought in one of the top ocean and beach engineering experts in the world who studies sand and sediment movement all around the globe. The process for this investigation will be to measure sand elevations and beach changes over time and after storm events to help answer questions about patterns of sand movement, whether wave action is bringing in and depositing materials on the beaches or whether the beaches erode and expose things.</p> <p>We picked a number of beaches around the east end of the island and SWMU 4 on the west end to study. The study transects are measured from dry land (vegetation line) to the depth of closure (depth in water where normal wave action no longer influences the movement of sand). Each beach has a series of transects out to the depth of closure that will be monitored. The current plan is to monitor these beaches for a year, but this could be extended after we review the initial results. It will be a bit more difficult to take measurements in the water than on land because we'll</p>

	<p>be able to walk out up to certain depths in the water, but then we'll need to use a boat or other watercraft beyond those points.</p> <p>The ultimate objective is to determine if and how munitions move along the beaches and in the near-shore surf zone. We will be placing substitute objects in the water to track movement over time (along the shore, to the shore, and out further in the water). Using different types of substitutes to replicate the movement of munitions. The main focus is to understand the beaches – the movement of sand – to ensure beach investigations and cleanup are appropriately designed.</p>
Stacie Notine (RAB Member)	Will we be able to get copies of this PowerPoint presentation?
Dan Waddill (Navy)	Yes. Madeline A. will put the presentation up on the web site.
Stacie Notine (RAB Member)	Sea mining is what the EOD teams do. They are trained to do this. Have you talked to the Navy about this?
Daniel Hood (Navy)	We won't be doing sea mining; we need to understand how artillery rounds or bombs move with the sand and water. We do have a work plan available to the public. This update tonight is just a summarization of the work to be conducted.
Madeline Almodovar (Facilitator)	For anyone who doesn't have internet access, we can provide you with hard copies of the presentation or documents. We will take a 5-minute break and then start with the regulatory agencies.
Wilmarie Rivera (EQB)	<p>Regulatory Agencies Update</p> <p>We have renewed our cooperative agreement with the Navy (MOA) which helps us fund our consultants. PREQB and DNER were given the grant on time. However, the authorization to contract our consultants was delayed at the Office of Management and Budget and at the Governor's Office. Therefore, we had to request extensions to some documents that needed to be reviewed. Our authorization was completed last Friday and we signed the contracts with the consultants on Monday. We are trying to get up to date with document reviews. In June, we made a projection of the documents due in July and we tried to get comments before the end of the fiscal year.</p> <p>Comments were submitted on the Community Involvement Plan. In addition to PREQB, personnel from the Governor's Office and press officials reviewed it from a non-technical standpoint, trying to figure out how to make the meetings more attractive and what other things could be done. On Tuesday, we had a meeting with the Navy, DNER, EPA and USFWS to see how we can improve the website to make it more attractive and easier to find information (all information is there) so any input from the community is welcome.</p> <p>Now that our funding is in place, we will continue coordinating regular inspections.</p>
Daniel Rodríguez (EPA)	In addition to the documents that you have heard about tonight, we have a few documents that are now under review. Once completed, they will be available to the public. We have been out doing site visits at UXO 15 and SWMU 4 (proposed plan issued for that site has been put on hold as there is more work to be done at the site). Daniel introduced other members of the EPA staff present.
Jose Font (EPA - CEPD)	I have been around the site for many years, even before the site was designated a Superfund Site. I am here today to reiterate our commitment. We have just designated additional resources for this project to extend our involvement (two additional program managers have been added to our team and Geoffrey Garrison will be assisting us with community outreach) to create a more robust interaction with the public and at the same time to be more focused on certain sites so that they can be returned as quickly as possible to beneficial use. Without your input we will not be able to reach consensus. Your cooperation and active participation is greatly appreciated.
Stacie Notine (RAB Member)	It is my understanding the Danny will no longer be participating and that the local office will be closed. It would be tragic if Danny left. It is important that he stay on.
Jose Font (EPA - CEPD)	The office is still open and Danny is at the office.
Angela Carpenter (EPA)	Thanks Stacie, I agree with you that Danny is an incredible resource. The scope of the project just became so large that we have had to expand our resources.
Member of the Public	Who is working in the Vieques office besides Danny?

Daniel Rodríguez (EPA)	We can't commit to anyone else at this point.
Linda La Violette (Member of the Public)	Congresswoman Velázquez requested \$40 million in funding for this project. Where does this stand?
Dan Waddill (Navy)	Unfortunately with budget cuts and since this is the most heavily funded project in the Navy, it is not likely that funding will be increased. Generally funding has been about \$20 million a year. Recently it has been a bit less and there may be additional funding cuts. This project by far is the most heavily funded project in the Navy and the site is the highest priority cleanup program for the Navy.
Linda La Violette (Community Member)	With other Superfund sites, they determine status and develop a remedy. Does this change as the Navy's investigation reveals different issues? I am unclear about the process?
Dan Waddill (Navy)	<p>Generally there is a CERCLA process that starts with various stages of investigations that get more and more detailed. Ultimately a risk assessment is done, with respect to explosive hazards or chemical risks, to determine the risks. Then the team determines different options for remedies and ultimately selects an option with input from the public.</p> <p>When we get to the public meeting phase, we will present you the remedial option recommended by the team of agencies. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the proposed remedial option with the public and get public feedback which will then be considered along with all other public input during the public comment period, a remedy chosen, and then implemented. That will occur for each of the sites still under investigation on the island.</p>
Angela Carpenter (EPA)	This site is so large (several thousand acres) that it has been divided into areas. As each site remedy is selected, it will be implemented.
Mark Martin (Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust)	EPA has invested more in this project than just Superfund; they have also provided work on clean up, sediment, water quality (and many more activities listed) and Danny has been a big part of that. We thank you. Will we also have an update on that underwater site today?
Dan Waddill (Navy)	The beach dynamics study was our underwater update for today. But, we did a side-scan sonar survey that was recently completed (covered about 12,000 acres) and a report will be coming out on that soon. We also are going to be doing a work plan for wide-area assessment across those acres this year and a biological assessment and we will have divers working off SWMU 4 in the next several months. Between the biological assessments and underwater assessments, a lot is happening with the underwater activities, and we will keep you updated as we gather information.
Mike Barandiarán (USFWS)	<p>We would first like to jump on board to say that we like having Danny here as well.</p> <p>Though we are not always on the same page as other members of our committee, I have to give kudos to the Navy and to CH2M HILL who have done a very good job. CH2M HILL also brought in a number of other biologists to assist the cleanup effort.</p> <p>Fish and Wildlife conducted a 4-day turtle nesting training that included some work with both dummy and real nests. Because we were concerned about the La Chiva area since it has a good coastal forest which is used for nesting sea turtles, we wanted all individuals who would be working in this area to be trained in how to minimize their impact.</p> <p>About 4 years ago Ticatove (Vieques community group) received a \$24,000 grant from Ecological Services to remove invasive species and plant native trees in this sector. They did a very good job in planting, though we thought that a lot of those trees died. It turns out that a lot more of those native trees survived than expected. The Navy has been cautious in this sensitive area to protect the nests and native trees, since the trees provide habitat for turtle nesting. In fact, some nesting already is occurring.</p> <p>We will also be planting more trees soon and are looking for volunteers to help with this effort.</p> <p>UXO 15 has been going fairly well. We are very excited that it will be open to the public by the end of the year with an official opening soon after. Once the area is open, tours will be allowed to begin. In the future, the plan is to stabilize and restore the lighthouse.</p> <p>We conducted a 4-month pilot study to open the area for fishing (commercial and recreational). We didn't get much public participation. Beginning September 12 (Friday), every other Friday we</p>

	will be opening the east side for night fishing (Pirates Cove, former tank area)) except for the April-June nesting season. [This fishing information is general information and unrelated to clean-up activities].
Madeline Almodovar (Facilitator)	Any questions?
	[None were asked.]
Madeline Almodovar (Facilitator)	If you are interested in being a RAB Member, please let us know. Thank you for coming.
	<p>Closing</p> <p>Meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.</p> <p>[No Action Items Required]</p>