



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

**RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD
Meeting Number 44
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m., February 25, 2015, Multiple Use Center, Vieques, PR**

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

Kevin Cloe – Ex Officio RAB Member, NAVFAC Atlantic
Madeline Rivera – NAVFAC Atlantic
Daniel Hood – Ex-Officio RAB member, NAVFAC Atlantic
Julio Vázquez – Ex Officio RAB Member, EPA
Daniel Rodríguez – Ex-Officio RAB Member, EPA
Geoffrey Garrison - EPA
Mike Barandiarán – USFWS
Victor Emeric – Mayor, Municipality of Vieques
Weldin Ortiz Franco – PR Environmental Quality Board
Sara Justicia – PR Environmental Quality Board
Donald Shaw – USAE
Brett Doerr – CH2M HILL
Madeline Almodovar – CH2M HILL
Ronny Fields – CH2M HILL
Colleen McNamara – Community RAB Member
Stacie Notine – Community RAB Member
Luther Landrum – Community RAB Member

Jose Gomez – Community Member
Ana V. Avache – Community Member
Lloyd Merrill – Community Member
Damara S. Sote – Community Member
Luis Lucas – Community Member
John Stoklosa – Community Member
Ellen Parker – Community Member
Harry Parker – Community Member
Steve Shadle – Community Member
Judi Space – Community Member
Delia May – Community Member
Mary Hillery – Community Member
Mitsuka Bermudez – Community Member
Daniel Vargas – Community Member
Kathy Gannett – Community Member
Carlos Jirau – Community Member

These minutes represent a summary of the meeting presentations, comments, questions, and action items and are not a verbatim transcript of the meeting.

Topics Discussed:

Opening and Introductions	
Dan Waddill (Navy) and Madeline Almodovar (CH2M HILL/Facilitator)	Meeting began at 6:00 PM. Welcome to Vieques Investigation and Cleanup NAVFAC Atlantic Restoration Advisory Board. Review of agenda and RAB meeting procedural elements.
Community Involvement Plan (CIP) and Community Outreach	
Madeline Rivera (Navy)	<p>Madeline discussed the Community Involvement Plan (CIP) and described the process used to update the document, which included in-person interviews and surveys mailed to all Vieques addresses. It was a combined effort among EPA, EQB, and the Navy. Results of 168 interviews and surveys provided information that helped the Navy evaluate existing and potentially new tools to communicate with the community.</p> <p>The draft document was submitted to the regulatory agencies who provided their comments, many of which were designed to make the document more user friendly. The revised draft to address those comments is with the agencies for review.</p> <p>The survey responses showed that some members of the community prefer to receive communication in hardcopy format (as well as electronic). The Navy will continue to use this kind of communication tool for outreach material, such as the newsletter, which was mailed to all addresses on the island a week or so before the meeting. English versions of hardcopy communications are available upon request.</p>
Community Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stacie Notine (Community RAB Member) asked about the availability of the Administrative Record (AR) and about how the Community Involvement Plan interviews were incorporated into the plan. Response: <i>Daniel Rodriguez (EPA) confirmed that hard copy documents may be obtained at the EPA Vieques Field Office and Navy representatives confirmed the AR is also available on the Navy Vieques public website.</i> <p><i>With regards to the CIP, Madeline Rivera (Navy) said that details of response summary of the survey responses will be provided in the updated CIP. Daniel Rodríguez added that the CIP will be available for public comment when regulatory approval is complete. Madeline added that the document will be available in English and Spanish. The public comment period will be announced in the newspaper and in the newsletter and flyer.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kathy Gannett (Community Member) expressed that the flyers and megaphone truck are very important for communication on the island. She also asked if the RAB will operate differently under the new CIP, hoping that other methods will be used to gather feedback from the community. Response: <i>Madeline confirmed that the flyers and sound trucks are included in the updated CIP. She also responded that the RAB function will continue, as required by law. Navy has been doing outreach to promote RAB membership, but emphasized participation is voluntary. Dan Waddill said the Navy has been receptive to any and all suggestions for enhancing community involvement. He reiterated that developing the CIP update has been a collaborative effort among the Navy, EQB, and EPA and their community involvement staff, and this is a renewed commitment to meet the community’s desires for involvement and communication.</i>

Underwater Work Update	
Dan Waddill (Navy)	Dan explained that updates about the underwater work will be provided at every RAB meeting. Dan introduced Brett Doerr from CH2M HILL to provide an update.
Brett Doerr (CH2M HILL)	<p>Brett said there is a lot of underwater work planned, and focused tonight’s presentation to cover the most near-term work.</p> <p>Beach dynamics study will look at how the beaches change over time at select beaches on the east and west sides of Vieques to help predict what might happen to near-shore, underwater munitions and munitions on beaches. Learning more about beach dynamics can help plan for the investigation and remedial action strategies in these areas. The work will start in March 2015 and last about 1 to 2 years. As data are collected, updates will be provided at RAB meetings.</p>
Community Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitsuka Bermudez (Community Member) asked if the beach dynamics study will be made available to the public. Response: Navy representatives responded that it will be available to the public. • John Stoklosa (Community Member) asked about the end result of the beach dynamics study. Response: Dan said that the beach dynamics study is designed to enable the Navy to look at the land and water together to better plan investigation and cleanup strategies along beaches. Brett explained that in addition to measuring the dynamic nature of the beaches, objects representative of munitions (munitions surrogates) will be placed in the water and their movement tracked for the duration of the study. • Stacie Notine asked about how depths of closure are determined, how many beaches are being studied, their location (all in restricted areas), and the characteristics of the surrogate munitions being used in the study. Response: Brett explained that the depth of closure is the depth beyond which sand (and likely munitions) do not move much except under strong storm conditions. He talked about the number of beaches included in the study and why they were selected. Brett also suggested additional detail can be found in the Beach Dynamics Work Plan contained in the Administrative Record. Daniel Hood (Navy) said that the actual specifications of the original munitions were used for the surrogates. The largest is a 500-lb bomb surrogate. • A community member asked if there has been no underwater collection of munitions, and in terms of scope, what percentage of munitions are expected to be found underwater from the total that were dropped. Response: Dan Waddill said that underwater studies have been done, but the decision was made about 10 years ago to focus on land areas first because potential exposure on land is higher than underwater. The methods for working on land were well developed. Underwater methods were not as well-developed 10 years ago. The Navy is evaluating and integrating underwater technologies as they become available.
Upcoming Work 2015	
Dan Waddill (Navy)	<p>Work discussed included:</p> <p>West Vieques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AOC E – Groundwater monitoring will be implemented in accordance with the Record of Decision. • SWMU 6 – Additional sediment data will be collected to help determine if a sediment remedy is needed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWMU 4 – Removal action is underway to support USFWS land management objectives and open area for public use. The beach at SWMU 4 will be part of the beach dynamics study and offshore areas will be investigated. <p>East Vieques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest effort is a wide-area assessment of about 12,000 acres underwater around the east end of the island. The wide-area assessment will help identify areas of potential high densities of munitions in the water and provide comprehensive information on areas for additional study. • In the near-term, the Navy will address known underwater munitions at Cayo La Chiva. Prior to addressing the munitions in a non-time critical removal action, the Navy needs to evaluate the potential presence of endangered coral, sea turtles and mammals to ensure they are protected during the removal action. • The Proposed Plan for the remedial action on the land portion of Cayo La Chiva will be available for public comment later this year or early next year. • Public access to the area around the lighthouse at Puerto Ferro will happen in the near future. Work will continue on the remainder of the peninsula, but the non-time critical removal action performed on the road and area around the lighthouse has been completed. • A Record of Decision for the Eastern Conservation Area is expected this year. The selected remedy will be sensitive to the unique habitat. The remedy could be implemented next year. • Munitions removal in the SIA/EMA areas is ongoing. More than 50 – 60 workers are out there every day clearing munitions from the land in the worst spots. Since the inception of the munitions clearance activities, more than 3,000 areas have been cleared in the ECA, LIA, SIA, and EMA. • Despite federal budgets cuts, Vieques continues to be the highest priority and receives by far the highest level of funding in the Navy Munitions Response Program. • Remedial investigations that include sampling surface water, sediments, soil, and ground water will continue across the east side of the island over the next year. The Navy is commencing a remedial action at the SWMU 1 landfill. SWMU 20 is a groundwater site, south of Camp Garcia. Navy expects to finish investigation report this year.
<p>Community Feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community member asked about archaeological findings on Cayo La Chiva. Response: Daniel Hood said that the Navy worked with the SHPO to identify areas of interest and archeologists surveyed the area. They catalogued findings and provided the information to the SHPO. The effort will enable the Navy to make sure work does not interfere with archeological sites. • A community member about the status of a site that was so dangerous to get to that burning (vegetation obscuring munitions) was considered and what is the size of the site was. Response: Dan Waddill explained that the 75-acre site is the sub munitions area in the Live Impact Area. Some burning may be required to ensure those dangerous munitions can be found and removed safely. The Navy is working with PREQB and EPA and is developing a new plan. No work in that area is anticipated this year.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stacie Notine asked if in SWMU 1, the Navy was finished with investigation and is planning to put soil cover on it and conduct monitoring. Response: <i>Dan Waddill responded that surface debris is being removed from the landfill and that monitoring will be part of the final remedy.</i> • A community member asked if the Navy has preliminary data that indicates SWMU 20 groundwater is contaminated. Response: <i>Dan Waddill said yes, the investigation has been ongoing for a couple of years and that the contaminant is trichloroethene, TCE, and it is in the groundwater. TCE was used as a degreaser to clean parts.</i> • A community member asked about availability of a webpage and if someone from the community could manage it. Response: <i>Dan Waddill (Navy) said that the Navy has a Vieques webpage, and the Navy is working to improve it within the Navy's requirement for webpages. The Navy always welcomes input, but there are a lot of restrictions on how a webpage gets managed because it is part of DoD.</i> • John Stoklosa said that at the August 2014 RAB meeting, a November 2015 opening for the Puerto Ferro site was discussed, and asked if there is a timeframe on the opening. Response: <i>Dan Waddill said that Mike Barandiarán (USFWS) will provide an update after the break.</i> • A community member was very impressed with the Navy's methodical work on studies and evaluations. Realizes the Navy will be able to remove a lot of munitions, but understands not everything can be removed, asked if the Navy thinks 90% of armaments will be removed by the time the work is finished, or money runs out. What's the end game? Response: <i>Dan Waddill said the funding is secure, and the Navy is committed to the Vieques work. The goal is to make the area safe for people to use based on USFWS land use. Even after the cleanup is complete, the Navy will return, if needed, to address munitions items that might be found in the future.</i>
Daniel Hood (Navy)	<p>Daniel provided additional information on SWMU 4. Navy has been working with regulators to come up with a plan to clear areas that USFWS will need cleared for the final remedy and address crab habitat areas and obtain information that would be needed to get to closure in the future.</p> <p>Mike Barandiarán gave the Navy an idea of what USFWS wants for the future that included a picnic area, parking, an observation tower and a couple of trails. The Navy is doing 100% surface and subsurface clearance of areas that would be used by the public. The former OB/OD pits will be cleared all the way down until no more munitions items are found. The Navy will also investigate how far out munitions and debris could have been thrown out from the pits by adding five "spokes" originating from the original pits to the removal action. The workers are doing a great job and the work is about 75 percent complete. An offshore investigation also will be done in the next few months.</p>
Community Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community member asked if the Navy has groundwater monitoring wells in the SWMU 4 area, what has been found, and what will be the remedy. Response: <i>Daniel Hood said there are monitoring wells in that area. Low level perchlorate is in the groundwater.</i> • A community member asked about the crabbing area status during the work. Response: <i>Daniel Hood said the workers have figured out a way to clear the area without cutting the vegetation. The workers will use the same paths the crabbers use to keep the crabbers safe.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community member asked if it is safe to use the island’s groundwater for irrigation and farming. Response: <i>Daniel Hood said there are no restrictions on use of groundwater on the island.</i> • A community member mentioned that during a site visit, he was told that there would be an assumption that people were expected to not wander beyond the fringes of the crabbing area. Response: <i>Daniel Hood said that the Navy is not making that assumption. The FWS crab permitting process may require the crabbers to obtain a permit and FWS will tell them where they can crab.</i>
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Regulatory Agencies Update

<p>Mike Barandiarán (USFWS)</p>	<p>Mike started by thanking everyone for their attendance and stating he hopes to answer people’s questions.</p> <p>He clarified some information about the Lighthouse that had been misunderstood by the community. In a previous RAB meeting, it was stated that the Navy will complete their work in the surrounding areas of the Lighthouse by November, which they did. The community expected to see these areas open to the public as soon as the work was completed. However, due to administrative reasons and coordination details with agencies, the opening of the surrounding areas did not happen until March 4th. He explained this situation and wanted to make it clear that it was the “opening process” and not a delay in the cleanup activities that pushed back the date.</p> <p>He then proceeded to invite everyone to the Open House on March 4th at 10 am for the opening of the surrounding areas of the Lighthouse. Representatives from the PREQB, EPA, the Navy, the MOV, and USFWS and possibly from the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources will be present to answer questions to the public.</p> <p>He clarified that the entire peninsula of Puerto Ferro will not be completely available for public access, only the parking lot, certain trails and access roads to the Lighthouse and surrounding areas, with the exception of the Lighthouse building itself, due to concerns with its structural stability given its age.</p> <p>He also mentioned that a separate meeting will be conducted with vendors in which they will explain in detail which areas can be accessed.</p>
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<p>Weldin Ortiz-Franco, President (PREQB)</p>	<p>Weldin introduced himself and announced he is the new PREQB president. He mentioned his purpose to be present at this meeting was to get involved in the Vieques project as soon as possible. He has been working at the EQB for 11 years, so is fairly familiar with the agency processes. He mentioned that Gloria Toro will be filling in following Wilmarie Rivera’s departure. Gloria had been helping Wilmarie “backstage” for a while by, for example, evaluating technical documents, and she is also knowledgeable about the project.</p> <p>He mentioned that both he and Gloria will be taking a tour of the facilities with the Navy the following day, during which they will observe different cleanup strategies and where they are at in the cleanup process.</p> <p>He wanted to make very clear that providing continuity was a big priority for him and the PREQB, such that the collaboration between PREQB, the EPA, and the Navy is not lost. He explained how the Navy reached out to him once he was made President of the PREQB and provided him with an ample presentation and information about the project. He stated he was very pleased to observe the Navy’s interest for continuity as well.</p>
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Daniel Rodriguez (EPA)	Danny Rodriguez stated that as Remedial Project Manager (RPM) he will be concentrating his efforts on the issues related to the underwater work unit. He indicated that there have been changes on EPA, now there are other RPMs working on the site: the Vieques EPA Field Office will remain open. He introduced the new members of the EPA Vieques team: Denise Zeno who is responsible for environmental sites; Julio Vazquez who is now involved with the work at munitions sites (land), and Geoffrey Garrison who leads the community involvement efforts.
Community Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kathy Gannett asked for the contact information for the new EPA Vieques staff. Response: Daniel Rodriguez will send her an email with their contact information. Madeline Almodovar (CH2M HILL) added that the CIP will also contain all the agency contact information for the program.
Julio Vazquez	Julio stated that he will provide EPA’s input on the same topics previously presented by the Navy saying that, as stated before, there will be a Time Critical Removal Action (TCRA) for SWMU 4. He showed a map with the designated areas by USFWS for picnic, parking, and observation tower; as well as the areas designated for crabbing. Based on the result of these designations, the Navy has performed additional characterization and munitions removal efforts based on the community input received on the Navy’s original proposed plan for SWMU 4. Julio showed the audience some photos of the areas he took while observing the operations related to the TCRA, including OB/OD pits, staging areas, and metal debris considered non-hazardous ready to be recycled. Julio discussed the documents currently under review by the regulatory agencies, including SMWU 6 on west Vieques. The thought behind EPA to group the issues within operative units and divide the work amongst several EPA RPMs was to accelerate the review and decision making process to make these areas available to the public. EPA has submitted comments on the Draft ROD for UXO 1.
Community Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stacie Notine asked if the explosive materials related to the TCRA are being blown-in-place. Response: Daniel Hood stated that like in any of the surface clearance process, if the materials present an explosive hazard and require further detonation, they are kept in an explosive storage magazine. If an item is unsafe to move, it will be detonated in place. Every one of the items found is identified, categorized, and logged into the database. • A community member asked about sediment sampling. Response: Julio Vázquez responded that EPA is in the process of reviewing the data for the sediment samples at SWMU 6. The data suggests that there is no need to take additional actions at the site since it does not present a threat for humans or the environment. • Stacie Notine asked if the Navy compares health and ecological risks on Vieques, with data from other Bases that have site restrictions. Response: Brett explained that the information from other bases is often included in reports for informational purposes. However, data from Vieques is not specifically compared with other bases. To generate the risk data specific for the island, the process uses standard risk assessments, which are approved by EPA.
Adjournment	
Madeline Almodovar (CH2M HILL)	The next RAB meeting is scheduled tentatively for May 20. Contact the Navy if you have conflicts with that date. Agenda and presentations will be provided before the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 pm.