



**Vieques Environmental Restoration Program  
Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Atlantic**

**RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD (RAB)**

**Meeting Number 59**

**6:00 p.m. – 8:35 p.m. | May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 | Jorge’s Ice House Activities Center, Vieques, PR**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

Dan Waddill – Ex-Officio RAB Member, NAVFAC Atlantic	Don Shaw – USA Environmental
Daniel Hood – Ex-Officio RAB Member, NAVFAC Atlantic	Michael Sosa – USA Environmental
Kevin Cloe – Ex-Officio RAB Member, NAVFAC Atlantic	Stacie Notine – Community RAB Member
Jessica Mollin -- Ex-Officio RAB Member, USEPA Region 2	Myrna Pagán – Community RAB member
Mike Barandiarán – Ex-Officio RAB Member, USFWS	Genoveva Rodriguez – Community RAB member
Susan Silander – Ex-Officio RAB Member, USFWS	Yashei Rosario – Development Trust of Vieques
Ricardo Antonetti – USFWS	Maribel Matta Brown – Community Member
Juan Babá Peebles -- Ex-Officio RAB Member, PRDNER formerly PREQB	Maria E. Mercado – Community Member
Maria Danois – CH2M/Jacobs	Amelia Mercado – Community Member
Bill Hannah – CH2M/ Jacobs	Ashly Flores – Community Member
Madeline Almodovar – CH2M/Jacobs	Evelyn Ortiz – Community Member
Daniel G. Concepción – CH2M/Jacobs	Pedro García – Community Member
Juan Torres Douglas – CH2M/Jacobs	

*These minutes represent a summary of the meeting presentation, informational posters, comments, questions, and action items and are not a verbatim transcript of the meeting.*

**Topics Discussed:**

<b>Opening</b>	
<b>Madeline Almodovar</b> (CH2M/Jacobs/ Facilitator)	The meeting began at 6:00 p.m. Participants were welcomed to the 59 <sup>th</sup> Vieques RAB meeting and were guided through a series of posters highlighting different aspects of the Vieques Environmental Restoration Program. Representatives from the Navy, USEPA, PRDNER (formerly PREQB) and USFWS were available to answer questions.

<p><b>Dan Waddill</b> (Navy Program Manager)  <b>Kevin Cloe</b> (Navy Project Manager)  <b>Daniel Hood</b> (Navy Project Manager)  <b>Susan Silander</b> (USFWS Wildlife Refuge System Supervisor)  <b>Mike Barandiarán</b> (USFWS Vieques Wildlife Refuge Manager)  <b>Jessica Mollin</b> (USEPA Region 2) – Remedial Project Manager  <b>Juan Babá Peebles</b> (PRDNER, formerly PREQB) – Federal Facilities Coordinator</p>	<p>Navy and regulatory agency representatives greeted the attendees, provided information, and answered questions posed by members of the RAB and the community. Each poster was also available to the attendees as a handout. A summary of the discussions is provided below.</p>
<p><b>Welcome and Introduction</b></p>	
<p><b>Dan Waddill</b> (Navy)</p>	<p>Dan Waddill welcomed the participants to the second part of the meeting and discussed the agenda.</p>
<p><b>RAB Community Members Opening Remarks</b></p>	
<p><b>Myrna Pagán</b> (Community RAB Member)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myrna Pagán read a letter sent to members of Congress, including Senators Tom Barrasso, Thomas Carper, House of Representatives Frank Pallone, Greg Walden, and Jennifer Gonzalez Colon, Puerto Rico Resident Commissioner. The letter was signed by various Non-governmental Organizations and individuals and described alternative methods used to dispose of munitions in other areas and suggested that they be used to dispose of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Vieques.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Feedback</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myrna Pagan appreciated the time allotted to read the letter and acknowledged that she did not expect that the Navy nor EPA issue a response at this meeting, she indicated that is why she sent the letter directly to Congress. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dan Waddill thanked Myrna for reading the letter and said he understands it was addressed to Congress and the USEPA and that the agency is working on a response to the authors. Dan added that the Navy will respond to Congressional members if an inquiry is issued yet indicated that the Navy was not directly addressed in the letter.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stacie Notine (Community RAB member) expressed that the conversation about open detonation and open burning has been lengthy and has lasted for a decade. Stacie would like the Navy to reframe the argument for using open detonation of UXO so that the community can understand the reasons why the Navy uses this method in Vieques. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dan Waddill (Navy) responded that the Navy understands that the community has questions regarding the method used to address UXO in Vieques and therefore the Navy has prepared informational factsheets on the topic to keep the community informed. Dan shared hardcopies of the factsheets with Stacie and invited other community members to either pick up a copy at the meeting or to access them on the Vieques Environmental Restoration public website. There are three factsheets relevant to this topic available at this time: “Detonation Chambers, UXO, and Explosive Safety,” “Munitions Cleanup and Air Quality on Vieques,” and “Controlled Burning in the Submunitions Area of Vieques”.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>These factsheets present the results from past air quality monitoring events, statistics on the number of UXOs disposed, and information on worker safety. These statistics demonstrate that the open burn/open detonation method is the safest for site workers and residents, and that there are no health impacts to the community.</p>
<p><b>General Project Update</b></p>	
<p><b>Verification Evaluation at Playa Caracas and Playuela</b></p>	
<p><b>Dan Waddill (Navy)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dan indicated that Playa Caracas (Red Beach) and Playuela (Garcia Beach) comprise areas that have been open to the public following initial investigations. Recently, the Navy determined to do a follow-up investigation in those areas. The planned field work affects the normal beach opening hours through the month of June 2019, that is why the beaches will be closed to the public on weekdays from 6:00 AM to 2:00 PM. He added that the investigation results will be presented on a future RAB meeting.</li> </ul>
<p><b>UXO 16 Status</b></p>	
<p><b>Dan Waddill (Navy)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dan stated that UXO 16 is comprised of approximately 12,000 acres, and it includes certain underwater areas surrounding the former Vieques Naval Training Range (VNTR) and the Naval Ammunition Support Detachment (NASD). These areas include former anchoring points for ships, offshore areas west of SWMU 4 and all around the eastern end of Vieques. He displayed a map with potential areas where munition items may be present because they may have fallen in the water within close range from where they were fired. The presentation included pictures of items that have been identified, and many are incrustated in coral.</li> <li>• Myrna Pagan (RAB community member) asked how the investigations and munitions removals would be performed. Myrna also asked about the waste disposal process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dan Waddill responded that the investigations are performed by a team of UXO and scientist divers. The UXO divers take care of the safety aspect of the munitions removal and the scientist divers provide oversight to prevent damage to marine life that could be present at the area where munitions are found.</li> <li>○ Dan Hood (Navy) described the removal process. Dan stated that the divers physically attach an air-filled lift bag to the UXO item, move it to a safe area and then lift the bag to the surface. This is followed by bringing the munitions to shore through a combination of towing them from a safe distance and once they get to shore, the items are carried with a remotely operated device that takes them from the shoreline to a safe location where they will be demolished behind the beach. Dan added that the waste remaining after a demolition is scrap metal which is tested and deemed safe before it is packaged inside bins and sent to a recycling facility.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stacie Notine (RAB community member) asked about the information included on the UXO 16 work plan, including depth of the items, the process to remove them and how each item found is documented. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dan Waddill (Navy) responded that the items would be brought to shore, with workers staying at a safe distance out of the danger of accidental explosion. Dan added that the Navy will be starting the underwater removal work once the work plan is approved. Items that have been already identified and are easier to remove will be prioritized. In turn, this may accelerate the opening of additional areas or beaches to the public.</li> <li>○ Daniel Hood (Navy) added that the investigation work is documented using thousands of pictures and hundreds of hours of video footage. The proposed removal process is documented in a Work Plan that has been drafted; the next step is to get approval from the Naval Ordnance Safety and Security Activity (NOSSA). After NOSSA, the Work Plan will be finalized and submitted for EPA, PRDNER, and USFWS review.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>UXO 4 Submunitions Area</b>	
<b>Dan Waddill (Navy)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dan described the work progress on UXO 4, highlighting that 23 acres of the 75 acres have already been cleared. The Navy and the regulatory agencies have developed a strategy which has resulted in significant progress over the two years since the work started in the Submunitions Area.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stacie Notine (RAB community member) asked who the Navy notifies before open burning and open detonation events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dan Hood (Navy) responded that the last burn event took place in December 2018. The notifications with information on the demolition work plan and the expected timeframe are notified to the USEPA, the USFWS, the Puerto Rico (PR) Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, the PR Environmental Quality Board, municipal and state police, the Police Bomb Squad and the Vieques Mayor’s Office.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Cayo La Chiva (UXO 18)</b>	
<b>Dan Waddill (Navy)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dan showed a location map of Cayo la Chiva and pictures with the landscape. He added that PRDNER manages this island. Dan presented PRDNER’s proposed land use plan, including hiking trails, anchorage areas, and educational kiosks. The Navy is close to completing the field work related to PRDNER’s land use plan and the installation of the educational kiosks.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stacie Notine asked who is responsible for long term monitoring of UXOs in Cayo La Chiva.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dan Waddill responded that the Navy is responsible for the management for warning signs and any additional investigation needed related to UXOs on Cayo la Chiva in the future.</li> </ul>
<b>Proposed Plan for UXOs 12 and 14</b>	
<b>Dan Waddill (Navy)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dan presented the background for UXOs 12 and 14, he stated that the areas are comprised of approximately 5,000 acres and they are part of the former Eastern Maneuver Area (EMA). The Proposed Remedial Action Plan for the sites was presented during a public meeting held on April 2, 2019, and that there were two requests for an extension of the public comment period, the requests were granted, extending the period until May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019.</li> <li>• Dan invited the public to review the documents and submit their comments so that the EPA, PRDNER/PREQB, USFWS, and the Navy can address the comments and issue the Record of Decision, which is the next step on the CERCLA process.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stacie Notine (RAB Community Member) asked about how comments are being addressed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jessica Mollin (USEPA) thanked the community for submitting comments and responded that the USEPA will forward the comments that the agency received and responses to the Navy so that they are included in the Responsiveness Summary section of the ROD document.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Regulatory Agencies Update</b>	
<b>USEPA</b>	
<b>Jessica Mollin (USEPA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jessica indicated that the USEPA is currently reviewing the public comments regarding the UXOs 12 and 14 PRAP and will be responding to each of them.</li> <li>• Jessica detailed that the USEPA maintains constant communication with PRDNER/PREQB, USFWS and the Navy. They engage throughout the year and not only during the RAB meetings.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myrna Pagán (RAB community member) asked what topics the comments were focused on. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jessica Mollin responded that they were mainly about asking to reduce Open Burning and Open Detonation as a practice in Vieques.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>USFWS</b>	
<b>Mike Barandiarán (USFWS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mike indicated that USFWS worked on the proposed land use plan for UXOs 12 and 14. He summarized the activities included in the plan, contemplating horseback riding, all-terrain vehicles access areas, hiking and beach use with anchoring areas. Mike added that they are working on Punta Arenas on the road leading to the Playa Laguna Los Pobres and Boca Quebrada, it is expected that they will be opened within June. USFWS</li> </ul>

	<p>is also working on building the boardwalk to address American Disability Act (ADA) compliance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mike thanked the Navy, USEPA, and PRDNER/PREQB for working together to facilitate access to the community to OP-1 to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Davis Sanes death on April 19<sup>th</sup>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stacie Notine asked at what point the community gets involved in the process of defining land use plans within the Vieques Wildlife Refuge.</li> <li>○ Mike stated that USFWS has a process called the CCP (Comprehensive Conservation Plan) in which the community was asked about the proposed uses and their vision on the refuge. He also added that the community can send in their comments to the proposed land use plan for UXOs 12 and 14 so that USFWS can address them. USFWS will consider the comments which may be integrated in a future update to the current proposed land use plan.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (formerly Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board)</b>	
<b>Juan Babá Peebles</b> (PRDNER/PREQB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juan explained the recent changes in the agency, including that the Federal Facilities Coordinator position he used to hold, was updated to a Project Manager in charge of all Department of Defense (DoD) projects on-island.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stacie Notine (RAB community member) asked how PRDNER handle document revision. She also asked where the agency stands regarding the CERCLA process and where the Vieques Superfund site is listed online. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Juan explained that the agency has two main contractors who act as consultants regarding DoD projects reviewing the document and providing comment. One contractor is an environmental engineering consultant and the other is a UXO consultant.</li> <li>○ Jessica Mollin (USEPA) responded that the Superfund website from USEPA has information on all Superfund sites and a link to the Vieques Environmental Restoration Program site.</li> <li>○ Dan Waddill (Navy) added that the Vieques Administrative Record contains all of the decision documents regarding the Vieques site and is also available online.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Adjournment</b>	
<b>Dan Waddill</b> (Navy)	<p>Dan thanked all the participants and presenters for attending the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:35 p.m. The next RAB meeting will be held on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genoveva Rodriguez (RAB community member) wanted to congratulate the Viequense employees who work at the field as UXO technicians because they are risking their lives to improve the Vieques environment. She shared that she has some technical background because she worked alongside the Puerto Rico Army National Guard.</li> </ul>