

## MEETING MINUTES

### Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) for the Environmental Restoration and Munitions Response Program in Vieques, Puerto Rico

Meeting Number 5 - August 11, 2005

#### I. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOMING REMARKS

The meeting began at 5:35 pm with welcoming and introductions of those present. Instructions on how to use the simultaneous translation equipment were also given.

A community member expressed a concern unrelated to the RAB. He said that the environment is not the issue for him; instead, he expressed his concern about the problem Viequesens are facing with the ferry transportation system.

#### II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes from the May meeting were approved without changes.

#### III. ONGOING BUSINESS

The agenda for this meeting was reviewed and the technical presentations were discussed first (see Section IV).

##### III.a Action Items Review

Action items were briefly reviewed. The following table summarizes the “open” action items carried over from previous meeting(s) and additional action items resulting from this meeting.

Description	Responsible Party	Status
Submit monthly reports describing the ongoing field and proposed activities	Navy and CH2MHILL	Open – Ongoing; next monthly report to be provide by mid-September 2005
Provide explanation of the rationale used for the selection of media sampling for the different sites (some of which include groundwater sampling).	Jeff Harlow-Navy	Open – To be discussed at a future technical workshop before the end of this year
Explain the rationale used to perform risk assessment and the role this assessment will have on selecting the final remedial action.	Jeff Harlow-Navy	Open – To be discussed at a future technical workshop before the end of this year
Provide RAB members with a list of all the PIs/PAOCs and their status	Brett Doerr-CH2MHILL	New – Open
Provide RAB members with a copy of presentations (from this and last RAB meeting).	Susana Struve-	New – Open

Description	Responsible Party	Status
	CH2MHILL	
Coordinate a conference call with RAB members on September 22, 2005 at 6:00 PM to discuss the Response to comments to the Background Work Plan for Eastern Vieques	Susana Struve-CH2MHIL	New – Open
Contact RAB members who are not attending meetings asking them to confirm they are still interested and have the time to continue participating as a RAB member	Navy – RAB members	New – Open

#### IV. TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS

##### IV.a Crab Study NOAA

David Holst (NOAA) presented a crab study status report. During the week of July 12, 2005, NOAA collected crab samples at 13 sites in Vieques and one background location in the DNER Wildlife Refuge in Humacao. The study's draft report is expected in December 2005. Results will be presented during a RAB meeting.

- Jorge Fernandez Porto (RAB community member) asked if NOAA was aware that there is a creek located near the one background location that was contaminated with mercury
  - o José Font (EPA Caribbean Division) responded that the site contaminated with mercury was extensively studied and remediated. It was found that the site did not affect the area ecosystem.
  - o Mike Barandiaran (USFWS member) stated that the site in Humacao was found free of contamination.
- Dr. Jorge Colón (TAG consultant) asked if Navy was aware that USFWS used a site in St. Croix as background during their crab study.
- Stacie Notine (RAB community member) asked what NOAA is going to do with the information collected.
  - o David Holst stated that the information collected will be passed to Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ASTDR).

##### IV. b Environmental Restoration Program Update

Jeff Harlow (NAVFAC) and Brett Doerr (CH2M HILL) gave an update of the Environmental Restoration Program (A copy of the presentation is included as Attachment 1). Brett started with an update on the planned supplemental investigations at AOC E and I and the investigation at AOC R on west Vieques.

- Stacie Notine (RAB Community member) stated her opinion that the Navy is manipulating data to show that AOC R is only a small area, and does not include the area further downstream along the creek (AOC J). She asked why these two areas are being treated separately.

- Brett Doerr replied that the potential sources of contamination at each site are geographically distinct. However, one of the objectives of the upcoming AOC R investigation (noting that AOC J has already been investigated) is to delineate the extent of contamination, which will help determine whether the two sites should be considered one site or remain as distinct sites. Brett emphasized that the boundaries of sites do not determine the boundaries of investigations. Investigations proceed both vertically and horizontally until the nature and extent of contaminants have been adequately delineated.
- Jorge Fernández Porto said that during the field visit in December 2004, staff noted what appeared to be a bridge connecting both sites (AOC R and J). If there is a connection between these two sites, the Navy cannot discard the possibility that these two sites were joined.
  - Brett again reiterated that evaluation of the nature and extent of contamination at both sites will help determine whether they are inter-connected and emphasized that future activities at the site will be conducted accordingly. It was also stated that a geophysical survey was conducted at AOC R that identified a debris area distinct from that at AOC J.
- Jorge Colón asked if the Navy is planning to do a geophysical study at AOC R?
  - Stacin Martin (CH2M HILL) replied that MEC were found on the surface of AOC J. This fact merited a geophysical investigation. Inert practice bombs were found at AOCS, which will be removed.

Jeff Harlow (Navy) summarized the status of debris removal planned for AOC J and SWMUs 6 and 7.

- A RAB member asked about the estimated quantity of debris to be removed, recycled, and disposed of in Vieques?
  - Jeff answered that of the estimated 10,000 tons of debris, only approximately 1,000 tons may be recycled because of the degree of degradation of the scrap metal. Large debris will be removed and disposed of elsewhere; the rest may contain soil with small quantities of debris that can be used as cover material in the landfill.
- Does this material contain any explosives?
  - Jeff replied that appropriate testing of the excavated material (for example, the toxicity characteristic leaching procedure (TCLP) parameters, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and total petroleum hydrocarbon (TPH)) will be done to ensure it is appropriately disposed of or reused.

Regarding the work at SWMU 4, Jeff Harlow explained that the Navy expects to award a contract for munitions removal in September 2005. It is estimated that MEC removal will be done on beaches to 4 feet and inland to 2 feet. Twenty to 50 acres will be included in contract, including a minimum of 8 acres of beach and 12 acres inland. Munitions removal is anticipated for early 2006. Additional acreage will likely be added for munitions

removal in late 2006. Removal is aligned with USFWS goals for site as established in CCP (Comprehensive Conservation Plan)

- Colleen MacNamara (RAB community member) asked what 4 feet on beaches means.
  - o Jeff answered that it means that surface removal of munitions and a geophysical study (to identify subsurface items) will occur followed by the removal of munitions to a depth of 4 feet. This is similar to what was done for Red and Blue beaches.
- Stacie Notine stated her opinion that open detonation/BIPs contaminate the soil, which the Navy is not removing.
  - o Jeff replied that at munitions sites, the Navy is doing munitions clearance first, followed by environmental studies and remediation.

Brett Doerr summarized the status of the Background Investigation Work Plan for east Vieques, noting the public comment period was from April 15 to June 15, 2005. The EPA is expected to respond to public comments by September.

- Jorge Fernandez Porto recognized that the Navy accepted moving several background locations per RAB members' recommendations during the site visit.

Brett Doerr summarized the status of the Work Plan for investigating Eight PI/PAOC sites, noting that the Draft Final Work Plan is anticipated to be submitted to the RAB in late August or early September (pending regulatory review).

- A RAB member asked if those eight sites are identified on a map.
  - o Brett answered yes, and showed a map with the locations identified. It was noted that these eight sites were identified as requiring a screening level investigation, based on historical information. The need for investigation and, if necessary, the investigation approach, for the rest of the PI/PAOC sites is under consideration by the agencies.

#### **IV.e FUNDING UPDATE**

- Jeff Harlow showed that for fiscal year (FY) 2006 more than \$25 M is allocated for west and east sites (for munitions response and environmental investigation/remediation)
- Jeff further noted that stakeholders need to work together to accomplish work and use available funding. Work must progress in a timely fashion to secure future funding. Funds not promptly committed may be redirected to other Navy environmental clean up programs.
  - Nilda Medina (RAB community member) asked where do you find this information about redirecting funds? She feels that this statement puts pressure on those of the community members who want to be sure that the work is done correctly. She further stated that the community members don't want to feel rushed to do work just because the funding may be redirected to other projects.

- Byron Brant (Navy) stated that Congress allocates funding to the Navy based on what the Navy tells them is needed for that year. But if the funding is not used, and there are other programs that need money, the Navy (Washington, DC) may redirect the funding to those other programs.
- Jorge Fernandez Porto said the Navy must understand that the community members are not stopping the process, but that they face language and political problems. He stated that the community members have asked for information and it has not been provided.
- Colleen MacNamara asked - How much was requested and spent last year?
  - o Jeff replied that \$8 M (\$5 M for east and \$3 M for west) were requested and spent.

#### **IV.f TCRA UPDATE**

Stacin Martin (CH2M HILL) gave an update of the TCRA work (A copy of the presentation can be found as Attachment 2).

- Michael Diaz (RAB community member) asked if the turtles are nesting now.
  - o Stacin Martin said that the areas are still being evaluated, but that a 7 meter buffer area around beaches will be used to avoid nesting areas. He further stated that work will avoid the nesting seasons of the different species. Geomarine (contractor) is conducting a survey to evaluate the threatened and endangered species potentially present.
- Mike Barandiaran stated that USFWS/Volunteers/DNER are working together to obtain nesting area data.
- Oscar Diaz (USFWS) stated that Geomarine has done extensive work in Vieques and uses biologists from PR with vast experience.

#### **IV.g COMMUNITY CONCERNS**

- Stacy Notine complained that minutes from last meeting were received only two days before this meeting. She also asked for copies of the presentations.
  - o Susana Stuve agreed, the meeting minutes should arrive one week before the meeting as stated in the Charter.
- Conference calls - RAB members expressed that the calls do work, but these should be done only when they are needed and not on a fixed schedule. The Navy and RAB also agreed to have a conference call when a document is provided for public comment.
- Training Sessions- Community members reminded the Navy about the two previously requested workshops on risk assessments and the hydrogeology of Vieques. They want to understand the specific site data criteria used in risk assessments. Stacie recommended having Lenny Siegel do the risk assessment workshop.

- Colleen asked when responses to comments on the Background work plan would be provided.
  - o Danny Rodríguez (EPA) answered that the EPA will respond to comments by September and expects that the field work can commence by October 2005.
  - o Lirio Márquez (RAB community member) stated that the RAB needs time to review the comments before the conference call and that more calls may be needed.

#### **IV.h RAB Representation**

Susana Struve stated that there are some RAB members who have not attended any RAB meetings and that a few have missed a couple of meetings. She stated the need to discuss a mechanism to have other members and areas of the community represented in the RAB. She said that the application process for this RAB included only the western part of Vieques, so it is important to open RAB membership to those interested and who represent other important sectors of the community.

- Nilda Medina said that the Navy needs to contact members not in attendance by letter. If a member does not respond to the letter or states no interest, then that member should be removed and others that have expressed interest should be included.
- Colleen MacNamara asked about the recently conducted interviews.
  - o Susana replied that Navy interviewed more than 25 people and were surprised that many people expressed no interest or were unaware of the agencies actions. The interviews focused on gathering data on public information needs and how to get the information distributed to a broader audience. The interview results will be used to update the Navy's community involvement plan.
- Adalina Cruz (RAB community member) stated that people in Vieques are in limbo about their interests and that she wants to work and reach her people. She further stated her following opinions: 1999 was the year Vieques was discovered by many agencies and people. People from outside Vieques came for the money but Viequenses did not receive anything. Viequenses are more concerned about their health than the lands, but nobody is spending funds to solve the health problem. Money for plants and animals is expended and nothing on people.
- Nilda stated that the Comité has a radio program that can be used to talk about what is going on with the clean up process.
- Jorge Fernandez said that people in Vieques are suspicious of anything that comes from Federal government and even PR government offices.

## **V. Next RAB Meeting**

The next RAB meeting was scheduled for November 16, 2005 at 5:00 PM. The location will be confirmed. The possibility of a Saturday date was discussed; this will be resolved during the September 22 conference call.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

**Note:** This summary is presented in English and Spanish for the convenience of the reader. Every effort has been made for the translations to be as accurate as reasonably possible. However, readers should be aware that the English version of the text is the official version.