

Vieques Cleanup Newsletter



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MAY 2016

Community Activities Update

Learn About Cleanup Progress at RAB Meetings

Participating in Vieques Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) meetings is an excellent way for community members to keep up-to-date and provide input on the cleanup progress. The most recent RAB meetings were held on November 17, 2015, at the Punta Mulas Lighthouse, and February 9, 2016, at the Vieques Multiple Use Center. During these meetings, the Navy updated participants on the variety of topics that included:

- Munitions removal action at Solid Waste Management Unit 4 (SWMU 4) on the west end of Vieques
- Underwater investigations such as the Wide Area Assessment and Beach Dynamics Study
- Status and cleanup progress at various environmental and munitions sites, including accelerated cleanup actions underway to speed public access
- Community involvement events
- A detailed description of the open detonation process

Representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) provided updates on regulatory agency activities associated with the cleanup.

Presentations, posters and complete minutes for both meetings can be found on the Navy's

Vieques website at www.navfac.navy.mil/vieques. Click on the **Community Outreach**, and then the **RAB Documents** links found on the left side of the page, then select the year **2015** or **2016**.

Restoration Advisory Board and Community Activities

RAB meetings are held four times per year and are open to the public. The next RAB meeting will be held May 17, 2016, at Jorge's Ice House. The third and fourth meetings for this year will be held on August 9 and November 16, 2016, respectively. Locations for those meetings will be provided at a later date.

Get Involved

- ✓ Attend quarterly RAB meetings to hear about the latest cleanup activities, ask questions, and provide input.
- ✓ The next RAB meeting will be held on May 17, 2016 at 6:00 PM at Jorge's Ice House in Vieques.

RAB Reviews RI Status Report for Five UXO Sites

Following regulatory review of the Remedial Investigation (RI) Status Report for five UXO sites (UXOs 4, 9, 10, 12, and 14), the report was provided to the Vieques RAB for a 30-day comment period that ended in mid-April 2016.

RI activities at these sites were conducted from July 2012 through March 2014 and included the digital geophysical mapping (DGM) to identify areas for sampling at locations of subsurface munitions, installation of groundwater monitoring wells, and collection and analysis of soil, surface water, sediment, and groundwater samples.

The RI activities for these sites were conducted to characterize the nature and extent of contamination associated with munitions and munitions-related chemical contaminants and to assess potential risks to human health and the environment. The information included in this report will be used to determine the next step for each of the five sites. For some sites, a feasibility study (FS) to evaluate potential remedial alternatives will be conducted. For others, additional sampling will be performed to complete the RI.

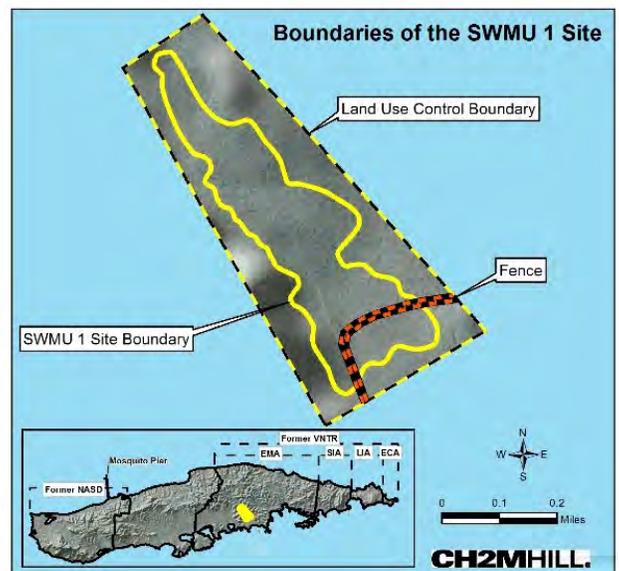
The RAB is composed of community members interested in collaborating with the agencies involved in the cleanup efforts. One of the RAB's responsibilities is to review reports and other technical documents and provide input into the cleanup process.

Munitions Response and Environmental Activities Update

SWMU 1 Remedial Action

SWMU 1, the former Camp Garcia landfill, was in operation from approximately 1954 to 1978. While operational, it received mainly municipal waste from the personnel staying on Vieques while working on the Vieques Naval Training Range. An estimated 3,120 tons of waste was disposed in the landfill using the trench method of disposal (i.e., a trench would be excavated, filled with waste, and covered with soil).

The remedial action was completed in April 2016 and consisted of removing debris from across the surface of the landfill, performing geophysics to confirm the landfill boundary, installing a fence and signs along the refuge road that passes through the southern portion of the landfill, installing boundary markers, and performing the first annual long-term groundwater sampling event. A report summarizing the remedial action, referred to as an Interim Remedial Action Completion Report (IRACR) is currently being prepared, as is a report summarizing the results of the groundwater sampling.



SWMU 1 boundary delimitation

Field Work Begins for Underwater Wide Area Assessment Investigation at UXO 16

UXO 16 consists mainly of areas adjacent to the former training ranges where munitions may have been inadvertently fired into the water from Naval gunfire training and bombing. Field work began in March 2016 for the underwater Wide Area Assessment (WAA) at UXO 16. The WAA will cover approximately 11,500 acres. Field teams are using use metal detectors (magnetometers) to identify areas containing large numbers of metallic objects that may indicate the presence of potential munitions items on, or buried beneath, the sea floor.

The WAA is not intended as a full-scale study of the nature and extent of munitions or munitions-related contamination at UXO 16. The WAA is the first step in a phased approach to investigate UXO 16. The findings of the WAA will be used to aid in the decision-making process and planning for future investigations and munitions response actions, as applicable, for UXO 16. The WAA is anticipated to be completed in several months, at which time a report will be prepared that documents the results and provides recommendations for future investigations and/or actions within UXO 16.

When complete, the UXO 16 WAA Report will be posted to the Navy's Vieques Facebook page and website.



A boat carrying specialized magnetometer equipment for underwater detection is used to perform the Wide Area Assessment.



Map showing munitions removal area and sensitive habitat in and around Punta Carrenero.

Update on Interim Removal Action at Punta Carrenero

To help facilitate planned public use, the Navy is prioritizing cleanup at Punta Carrenero and the road leading to the peninsula. The work includes using the remotely-controlled excavator to remove subsurface anomalies identified using digital geophysical mapping (DGM) along several beaches within the Punta Carrenero area, including Jaloiva, Yoye, and Fanduca.

The future land use plan for these areas includes hiking/biking trails, and access to beaches and bordering terrestrial areas for wildlife viewing.



Bahia Yoye



Bahia Jaloiva

Technology Highlight

Remotely-operated Excavator for Munitions Cleanup

A remotely-operated, long-reach excavator is being used to excavate subsurface munitions from roads and beaches intended for public use and Refuge management. Using “live-action” video attached to the excavator, the operations are controlled from a command center located at a safe distance. Because workers are located a safe distance from the excavator, munitions cleanup can often progress faster and deeper than is possible by workers using manual digging methods. The remotely-operated excavator has the ability to not only dig up munitions, but can use a spinning sifting screen to segregate munitions and debris from soil (see photo).



Remotely-controlled excavator segregating munitions and debris from soil

Munitions Safety

Recognize, retreat, and report (the 3Rs) if you encounter munitions or any item of which you are unsure.

Recognize

If you encounter or suspect you may have encountered a munition or see something of which you are unsure, consider it extremely dangerous. Remember, munitions are sometimes hard to identify.

Retreat

If you encounter or suspect you may have encountered a munition, do not touch, move or disturb it, but immediately and carefully leave the area following the same path on which you entered. If you can do so safely, mark the general

area, not the munition, in some manner (for example, with a hat, piece of cloth, or by tying a piece of plastic to a tree branch, but do not touch the item).

Report

When you think you may have encountered a munition, call 911 or the police at 787-741-2020 to report what you have found.



Frequently Asked Questions

How does the Navy and regulatory agencies work around turtle nesting habitats?

The VNTR has many beaches where green, hawksbill, and leatherback sea turtles are known to nest. Whenever possible, Navy cleanup activities involving these beaches are planned to occur during the time of year when no sea turtle nesting is anticipated, which is from January to mid-February. However, if a beach cleanup is necessary during the nesting season, beach monitoring for turtle nesting is conducted to ensure protection of the threatened and endangered turtles. Daily monitoring by trained and experienced personnel for nest activity begins at least 75 days before a beach cleanup begins, and continues for the duration of the work. When a nest is found, information is collected such as location coordinates, track width, and sea turtle species. This information is entered onto data sheets and provided to the USFWS, who may return (with Navy escort) to this nest to dig and collect post-hatch data. A zone of protection is then maintained around the turtle nest during site work.

Important Contacts

Dan Waddill
Head of Vieques Restoration Section
 Telephone: (757) 322-4983
 E-mail: Dan.Waddill@navy.mil

Daniel Hood
Remedial Project Manager
 Vieques Restoration Section
 Telephone: (757) 322-4630
 E-mail: Daniel.R.Hood@navy.mil

Kevin Cloe
Remedial Project Manager
 Vieques Restoration Section
 Telephone: (757) 322-4736
 E-mail: Kevin.Cloe@navy.mil

Madeline Rivera
Vieques Site Manager
 Vieques Restoration Section
 Vieques Field Office, Camp Garcia
 Telephone (757) 286-6457
 E-mail: Madeline.Rivera@navy.mil

Daniel Rodriguez
EPA Remedial Project Manager
 Vieques Field Office
 Telephone: (787) 741-5201
 E-mail: Rodriguez.Daniel@epa.gov

Mike Barandiaran
Vieques National Wildlife Refuge Manager
 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 Telephone: (787) 741-2138
 E-mail: Mike.Barandiaran@fws.gov

Susan Silander
Refuge System Supervisor, Wildlife Refuge Administration
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Telephone: 787-851-7258, ext. 238
 E-mail: susan_silander@fws.gov

Gloria Toro
Environmental Permits Officer
 Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board
 Telephone: (787) 767-8181, ext. 3586
 E-mail: GloriaToro@jca.pr.gov

Craig Lilyestrom
Director, Marine Resources Division
 Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources
 Telephone: (787) 772-2022
 Email: craig.lilyestrom@drna.pr.gov