



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

***Programa de Restauración Ambiental de Vieques
Comando de Ingeniería de Instalaciones Navales (NAVFAC) Atlántico***

VIEQUES RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD (RAB) MEETING NUMBER 61

REUNIÓN DE LA JUNTA CONSEJERA PARA LA RESTAURACIÓN DE VIEQUES NÚMERO 61

**February 26, 2020 | Multiple Use Center, Vieques | 6:00 PM to 8:30 PM
*26 de febrero de 2020 | Centro de Usos Múltiples, Vieques | 6:00 PM a 8:30 PM***

AGENDA

6:00 PM – 6:30 PM	Poster Session: Navy Environmental Restoration Program Updates <i>Sesión de Afiches: Actualización Sobre el Programa de Restauración Ambiental de la Marina</i>	Dan Waddill/Navy (Marina) Kevin Cloe/Navy (Marina) Daniel Hood/Navy (Marina) Maria Danois/Navy (Marina)
6:30 PM – 6:45 PM	RAB Opening Remarks <i>Comentarios de Apertura del RAB</i>	Community RAB Members (Miembros de la Comunidad del RAB)
6:45 PM – 7:30 PM	Cleanup Updates <i>Actualización del Proyecto de Limpieza</i>	Dan Waddill/Navy (Marina) Kevin Cloe/Navy (Marina) Daniel Hood/Navy (Marina) Maria Danois/Navy (Marina)
7:30 PM – 7:40 PM	Break <i>Receso</i>	
7:40 PM – 8:00 PM	Regulatory Agency Updates <i>Actualización de las Agencias Regulatorias</i>	USFWS PRDNER (DRNA)/PREQB (JCA) EPA
8:00 PM – 8:30 PM	Questions and Answers <i>Preguntas y Respuestas</i>	Members of the Public (Miembros del Público)



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

RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD (RAB)

Meeting Number 61

6:00 p.m. – 8:40 p.m. | February 26, 2020 | Vieques Municipality Multiple Use Center, Vieques, PR

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

Dan Waddill – Ex-Officio RAB Member, NAVFAC Atlantic	Rosa Esquivel – CH2M/Jacobs
Daniel Hood – Ex-Officio RAB Member, NAVFAC Atlantic	Susana Struve – CH2M/Jacobs
Kevin Cloe – Ex-Officio RAB Member, NAVFAC Atlantic	Don Shaw – USA Environmental
Douglas Pocze – Ex-Officio RAB Member, USEPA Region 2	Management Employee – USA Environmental
Jessica Mollin – Ex-Officio RAB Member, USEPA Region 2	Stacie Notine – Community RAB Member
Mike Barandiarán – Ex-Officio RAB Member, USFWS	Myrna Pagán – Community RAB member
Susan Silander – Ex-Officio RAB Member, USFWS	– Sabrina White (member of the public)
Maria Danois – Ex-Officio RAB Member, NAVFAC Atlantic	– Walter Alomar (guest -The Ocho)
Bill Hannah – CH2M/Jacobs	– Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan (guest)
Brett Doerr – CH2M/Jacobs	– Josue Bermúdez - 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.

RAB Poster Session

The poster session began at 6:00 p.m. Participants were guided through a series of posters providing up to date information on different aspects of the Vieques Environmental Restoration Program, including current status of the investigations at restoration sites, status of the investigations of underwater and beach sites, status and plan for munitions response sites, the CERCLA process (the law that guides all the investigations and actions on Vieques), public areas and offshore safety sites, and the open detonation process with emphasis on the type of munitions, safety for the workers and public safety. Representatives from the Navy were available to answer questions. Each poster was also available to the attendees as a handout.

RAB Meeting – Welcome and Introductions

Susana Struve (Facilitator CH2M/Jacobs)	Susana welcomed the participants to the 61st Vieques RAB meeting and started the meeting indicating that Ms. Rosa Esquivel will take the lead facilitating future meetings. Susana introduced Mr. Dan Waddill.
--	--

<p>Dan Waddill (Navy Program Manager)</p>	<p>Dan welcomed and thanked the participants for taking the time to attend. Dan indicated that the goals of the meeting are to provide an update on the Navy cleanup and to give everyone the opportunity to speak. The agenda for the meeting includes: remarks from RAB members, ongoing projects, regulatory agencies updates, and questions/answers from the public. Dan indicated that we have a guest for this meeting, Walter Alomar, a representative from <i>The Organization for Culture of Hispanic Origins (OCHO)</i>, he too will have the opportunity to address the attendees.</p>
<p>RAB Remarks</p>	
<p>Myrna Pagán (Community RAB Member)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Myrna indicated that it has been 6 months since the last RAB meeting and asked why is that the previous meeting was cancelled without given many details to the community; budget constraint for travel as a reason for not having a meeting is something that it is hard to understand, she added. Myrna also mentioned that she assumes that the cleanup activities had continued during this time. She feels that it is necessary to enhance the communication with the community. ● Myrna proceeded to read a letter sent to Secretary of the Navy by Congresswoman Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez in reference to the specific amendment article of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that stipulates the purchase of a closed detonation chamber and a water jet cutting equipment to be deployed to the former bombing range located outside continental US as part of the active remediation program. The letter continues to mention Congresswoman’s concerns for the health of Vieques and that these resources will provide critical aid to the cleanup of hazardous military waste on Vieques, an island which continues to recuperate from the impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The amendment includes budgetary allocations for the purchase of this equipment and has specific requests for detailed information on how and when the Navy is planning to use these resources in Vieques. Myrna has copies of this letter if anyone is interested. ● Myrna expressed that the Vieques community is also interested in getting more information on when these resources will be implemented in Vieques. She is also very pleased that finally someone has listened. Myrna also indicated that she has brought Licenciada Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan, a consultant who has been supporting Vidias Viequenses Valen. ● Ms. Ora Bannan (consultant) wants to reiterate the request from Myrna to the Navy, to communicate specifics of the timeline for the purchase of the equipment, the areas in which these resources will be used, and the continuity of the process long term. Ms. Ora Bannan also requested that in response to community concerns related to several tactics used by the Navy and approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for remedial efforts, (i.e. open detonation and open burning), information on alternative methodologies be provided to the community.
<p>Community Feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stacie Notine (Community RAB member) stated that Navy and the regulatory agencies have determined the extent of the contamination and she feels there should be a more continuous information flow to be able to understand levels of contamination in different media, including groundwater investigations and data from air monitoring during munitions response activities. Stacie requests a further discussion on these topics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dan Waddill indicated that the presentations that have been prepared for the meeting will provide some additional information and may answer some of the questions raised; at the end of the meeting there will be additional opportunities to answer other questions. ● Sabrina White (member of the public) stated that during the poster session she observed the word cleanup in some of the information presented related to open detonation, in her view, this method of munitions removal adds to the contamination producing emissions that impact several media. She asked and expressed that in her view all operations should be stopped until the chamber is built. ● Walter Alomar (Guest - President of the Organization for Culture of Hispanic Origins) brought attention to a study done by Dr. Jorge Colon from Puerto Rico who found that the Vieques population is contaminated with different levels of lead, arsenic, and cadmium. Mr. Alomar

	<p>understands that there are studies that oppose these conclusions, but he thinks that if the land, air, and water are contaminated, then people must be affected. He asked what does it take for the people to be acknowledged and stated that people are dying with no access to treatment and entire generations are being impacted. He added that he understands the land needs to be clean, but the land must be returned to the people, to healthy people.</p>
--	---

Ongoing Projects

<p>Daniel Hood (Navy Project Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel indicated that the last meeting was cancelled due to federal budgetary travel restrictions at the federal level outside of the Vieques team control. Daniel added that all field activities shut down for the months of November (Thanksgiving), December, and parts of January. • There was a safety incident in November, where an explosion injured fingers of a site worker; the incident happened in the Central Processing Center (CPC). • Ms. Notine (community RAB member) asked how long the CPC had been operating and how much material is handled. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daniel indicated that the CPC has been working since the start of the project in 2005; close to 20,000,000 pounds of metal have been processed off the island thus far from material that have been found in the field which gets double inspected, and changed shape so it does not look like a munition, before the metal can be sent to be recycled to an authorized dealer in Puerto Rico.
--	---

• Munitions Time-Critical Removal Actions (TCRAs) at Playa La Chiva, Playa Caracas and Playuela

<p>Daniel Hood (Navy Project Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel indicated that there is a TCRA coming up at Red Beach, Blue Beach, Playa la Chiva and Garcia Beach. Daniel explained that in the CERCLA process, “time critical” is a response action that needs to be addressed promptly. Since this is a public beach, the Navy decided that it needs to be quickly addressed. The beaches will be shut down to be able to do this work. • Daniel indicated that what prompted the TCRA is that during an investigation at Red Beach using advanced electromagnetic sensors, some subsurface electromagnetic anomalies were detected. The regulatory agencies were informed of these findings, and currently, the Navy and the regulatory agencies are in the process of developing a Work Plan to remove any munitions items associated with these anomalies. The work is planned for this summer. The Navy has posted warning signs that prohibit digging in these areas. The signs also describe the 3Rs munitions safety message to promote public safety. • Ms. White (member of the public) asked about other non-munitions sites and if the Navy is going to do an investigation of the entire island since there may be other suspected areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daniel replied that for all former Navy property, the 3Rs message must be followed. If there is something you suspect is a munition item, recognize, retreat from the area, and report the sighting so that the Navy can evaluate the potential risk. • Ms. Notine (community RAB member) commented on her belief that records indicate the use of a number of harmful chemicals in these areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daniel responded that chemical weapons were not used in Vieques.
--	--

• UXO 16 Nearshore Non-Time-Critical Removal Action – Second Event

<p>Daniel Hood (Navy Project Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel indicated that on Monday, the Navy will start removing visible items from the nearshore east end of the island (Bahia Icacos and Bahia del Sur) for the next three months; this will be a multi-year operation. • Kevin Cloe (Navy Project Manager) indicated that a flyer has been developed with additional information on these dives and the timeline; the flyer has been distributed in the community; this flyer was also sent electronically to the mailing list. • Daniel continued to explain that investigations have continued in the Surface Impact Area, it is expected that this work will take place for an additional year; and that the Navy continues clearing bombs found of the surface of the Live Impact Area and Submunitions Area using open burn and open detonations. • Ms. White (member of the public) indicated that some of the reading materials claimed that munitions on land can't be moved and that is why the open detonation is necessary, but tonight we hear that munitions are being removed from the water, please explain. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daniel responded that in the water, the use of a remotely operated lift bag allows workers to retrieve the munitions from a safe distance, float them in the ocean, and remotely move them to shore for further disposal. • Ms. Ora Bannan (consultant) asked about the timeline for cleaning to deeper levels. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daniel responded that subsurface cleanup has been completed to a depth of 4 feet on beaches outside the Live Impact Area, and that the Navy has cleared miles of roads to a depth of 2 feet. The levels of cleanup follow the intended use of the lands. These strategy decisions are made by the Navy in concurrence with the regulatory agencies, EPA, and Department of Natural Resources of Puerto Rico (PRDNER) / Environmental Quality Board (EQB) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). • Stacie Notine (community RAB member) enquired about air monitoring. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daniel indicated that there is a fact sheet available in the back of the room with information on air monitoring activities. • Myrna Pagan (community RAB member) enquired about the Sustainability Task Force. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dan Waddill indicated that it was an initiative under the Obama administration; after the new elections took place, that initiative stopped.
--	---

• Vieques Community Involvement Plan (CIP) Update

<p>Maria Danois (Navy Site Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria introduced herself as the Navy Site Manager and proceeded to explain current and planned activities related to the Vieques Community Involvement Plan (CIP) update. • Maria indicated that the last CIP was updated in 2015 using the information that the community provided to enhance public participation and awareness and to continue to keep the community informed and engaged; new initiatives included a Facebook Page, a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fair for all high school students on Vieques, and more visible (kiosks and flyers) information related to the 3Rs, as it continues to be a priority for the Navy. • This new update will try to gather community input to evaluate the current activities and incorporate new concerns and ideas to reach the public with the information.
<p>Community Feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myrna Pagan (community RAB member) expressed that the main topic the community is interested in is information related to health impacts related to the contamination and how the public can be protected. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maria replied the Navy is not the agency that studies the health of the population and added that the Navy includes in the site investigations health risk assessments, these documents that can be found in the repository.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel Rodriguez (EPA) stated that the Navy has provided information on the findings from the investigations, including those related to potential health risks, during meetings, in flyers and directly to the community through different outreach events, like the fairs previously mentioned. Daniel added that following the CERCLA process during the Record of Decisions (ROD) step for each site, health risk assessments are specifically discussed, and site-specific ROD documents include a public comment period. • Stacie Notine (community RAB member) hopes that this new CIP will truly incorporate and consider community concerns. One of Stacie’s main concerns is the level of lead in children and the regulatory oversight by EPA on this particular topic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dan Waddill responded that the Navy and EPA had reached an agreement on how to evaluate the lead data on Vieques. • Stacie requested more information on when the agreement was reached and more details on lead risk evaluations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maria indicated that this is exactly the objective of the CIP update, to gather the community concerns and preferred methods to reach the public with the information. In that sense, a survey will be available to the public from March 2, 2020 through April 3, 2020. In an effort to reach all sectors of the community, the survey will be available online, electronic copies will be mailed to RAB members and to the mailing list, printed copies will be mailed to all of the mail boxes on the island, printed copies will be available around town for those without access to internet (Biblioteca Electrónica, Post Office and key locations in town), additionally, if anyone one needs a survey, he/she can contact Maria Danois directly. The Navy is making every effort to reach the community and exhorts the public to fill out the survey so that concerns and input can be addressed in the next CIP. • Ms. Ora Bannan (consultant) commented that there are only few members of the community attending the RAB meeting and that the information presented is geared for people who already are aware of the technical jargon. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maria replied that the RAB meetings are announced through several ways, electronically, through flyers, using a megaphone around the island; Maria added that is exactly what the CIP survey is all about, please submit your comments on the survey so we can evaluate the current outreach strategy geared to enhance more public participation.
--	--

• Funding for Detonation Chamber in Vieques

<p>Dan Waddill (Navy Program Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan indicated that the Navy is following the requirements of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020 that directs the Secretary of the Navy to purchase and operate a portable closed detonation chamber and water jet cutting system at a former naval bombardment area located outside the continental United States. Although the NDAA does not mention Vieques specifically, the requirement applies to Vieques. The law authorizes \$10,000,000 for fiscal year 2020 to conduct these activities. Options are currently being evaluated by the Navy. As always, the safety of the workers and the public is the primary concern. The funding has not reached the Navy yet, but the Navy is already evaluating the types of systems available that would be applicable to Vieques. When funding is available the Navy will move ahead to purchase the systems. • Dan also indicated that the Navy is evaluating several vendors and informed that this week two vendors came to Vieques to evaluate the site and provide input on the needs. • Myrna Pagan (community RAB member) asked if information about the size and weight of the munitions is available, as she remembers several related discussions from past meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dan indicated that all that information is available and added that as discussed before, there are several restrictions associated with using the chambers; for example, some munitions are too sensitive to move, and others are too large to be contained in a chamber. The Navy’s main priority again is the safety of the workers and the wellbeing of the community.
--	--

- Ms. Ora Bannan (consultant) asked if there will be a timeline for the use of the chamber and if there will be a report of the percentage of munitions that can be put in the chamber.
 - Dan replied that all information related to use of the chamber will be made available and added that there is no timeline yet as funds have not been received. Dan also indicated that the timeline will depend on the type of federal funding received, and currently the Navy is diligently working on evaluating the options available. In general terms, Dan added, we expect to have and use the money this year.
 - Dan further added that until the chamber is operable on site, open detonation will continue, as the removals are making the island safer for the people, noting that there are some munitions that can't be put in any chamber and need to be disposed using open detonation.
- Myrna asked if there is anything the community can do to expedite the funding and the purchase of the chamber.
 - Dan replied there is no opportunity for community participation because the Navy must simply follow the federal funding process. He reiterated that the Navy will comply with the law and get both pieces of equipment as fast as possible, use them as needed on Vieques, and then work to move them to another facility, if there is capacity left.
- Ms. Stacie Notine (community RAB member) asked if the chamber will be sufficient for a particular criterion, and if this is something Navy will decide. She also asked if the investigation will include subterranean events or not and if previously used methods will help determine what Navy is anticipating being found.
 - Dan indicated that the Navy has a good handle on the type and amount of munitions that remain to be found. The chamber will only be used to address munitions that are small enough to fit in the chamber and safe enough to place in the chamber. For example, the chamber will not be used to address submunitions as those items are too dangerous to be moved.
- Dan indicated that the Navy is working under the CERCLA process, and for each site if the investigation shows additional munitions concerns, the site will be expanded as it has been done multiple times on Vieques. The Navy is expecting to remove munitions from all munitions sites on Vieques, although it is possible that some munitions will escape detection and be left behind; so land use controls and safety messages (such as 3Rs signs) will need to be followed. The safety of the people is of the utmost importance.
- Ms. White (member of the public) cited a report from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) related to pollutants from open burning/open detonation and prompted the Navy to stop these practices.
 - Dan replied that there are also statements from the NAS report indicating that for safety reasons, open burning and open detonation will always be needed, because some munitions can't be treated safely by any other method (such as a detonation chamber). This is the case on Vieques because the cleanup involves unexploded ordnance (UXO), which have been fused and fired, but somehow failed to explode as expected. UXO items are particularly dangerous because they are set to explode and may do so without warning. Therefore; for safety reasons, workers must minimize handling and transport of UXO. In order to use a detonation chamber on Vieques, UXO would need to be picked up, carried long distances across rugged, hilly terrain, loaded onto a trucks, transported on bumpy roads to a storage location, unloaded and placed into storage, and ultimately removed from storage and set up in the chamber. This extensive amount of handling and transport of UXO would not be safe for the site workers; therefore, open detonation is the only safe option for the UXO on Vieques. Computer modeling and many years of environmental sampling have shown that the open detonations do not cause a health risk for the residents of Vieques.
- Ms. White (member of the public) asked if the Navy is holding off on items that might be considered to be detonated in the chamber or are the plans is detonate everything found?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dan indicated that there are some munitions items (i.e., small projectiles) that are good candidates for the chamber, and they are being held for future disposal in the chamber. - Dan said the Navy has shared and discussed information about open detonation and detonation chambers with the RAB in multiple occasions during the past 15 years. In addition, several years ago, there was a meeting with EPA, EQB, and the public to discuss this subject specifically without the Navy; the message was the same. - Dan added that UXO experts and quality control staff put their life at risk every day to clean up munitions on Vieques, and they are the ones who need to make the safety decisions in the field. • Daniel Rodriguez (EPA) indicated that the agency did a presentation to the community on this subject 9 years ago, when the Navy was working with large items in the Live Impact Area, as investigations had continued the number of items has changed significantly; at the time due to the size of the munitions the percentage of items that could be put in the chamber was very low; as the work had continued towards the west, the items found are smaller and may fit the capacity that can be put in the chamber; whether they can be moved or not into a chamber, UXO field technicians are the ones that make that call. • Myrna Pagan asked if \$10,000,000 is enough money to purchase the water jet and the chamber. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dan responded that the amount of money seems to be enough for both pieces of equipment, at this stage of the evaluation process. • Ms. Ora Bannan (consultant) asked about other alternatives to stop the open detonation, a tactic that is clearly problematic for this community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dan responded that one of the conclusions of the NAS report was that open detonation will always be needed for safety reasons, and this is the case for the UXO on Vieques. Dan added that computer modeling and many years of environmental sampling have shown that the open detonations do not cause a health risk for the residents of Vieques. Fact sheets describing these studies are available as hand outs in the back of the room and are also available on the Vieques Facebook page and the website.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan indicated that the meeting has run over the programmed time and there is no time for a regulatory agency update and asked if anyone has any additional comments. • Mr. Josue Bermudez (community member) expressed dissatisfaction towards the Navy that arrived in Vieques in 1942, and he said that the new generation of Viequenses will not be silent.
<p>Adjournment</p>	
<p>Dan Waddill (Navy)</p>	<p>Dan thanked all the participants and presenters for attending the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:40 p.m. The next RAB meeting will be held on May 16, 2020.</p>