

# Vieques Cleanup Newsletter



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NOVEMBER 2016

## Community Activities Update

### RAB Meetings Foster Input from the Community

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 May 17, 2016, at Jorge's Ice House, and on August 2, 2016, at the Punta Mulas Lighthouse.

Additional information can be found on the Navy's Vieques website at [www.navfac.navy.mil/vieques](http://www.navfac.navy.mil/vieques). On the website's homepage, click on the **Community Outreach**, and then the **RAB Documents** links found on the left side of the page.

### RAB Provides Input on Site Cleanup Documents

The Vieques RAB helps community members learn about and provide input on the Navy's environmental restoration and munitions response programs by reviewing and commenting on a variety of technical reports.

The RAB is currently reviewing the following documents:

- **AOC E 2016 Remedial Action Annual Status Report**
- **Solid Waste Management Unit (SWMU) 1 2016 Long-Term Monitoring Annual Status Report**
- **Work Plan for Non-Time Critical Interim Removal Action (NTCRA), UXO 15 Photo Identified (PI)-9 East and Adjacent UXO 16 Encrusted Munitions**

### Get Involved

- ✓ Attend quarterly RAB meetings to hear about the latest cleanup activities, ask questions, and provide input.
- ✓ Provide comments on the Proposed Plan for SWMU 6. The public comment period began October 10 and ends November 23, 2016. A public meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 16, from 6:00-7:00 PM at the Punta Mulas Lighthouse, Route #200, Morropo Street, in Isabel Segunda, Vieques, Puerto Rico.
- ✓ The next RAB meeting will be held on November 16, 2016 from 7:15-9:00 PM at the Punta Mulas Lighthouse (following the SWMU 6 Proposed Plan public meeting). Representatives from the Navy, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (EQB), and Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) will provide updates on the cleanup progress.
- ✓ Provide comments on the Proposed Remedial Action Plan for UXO 18, Cayo La Chiva. The public comment period ends on February 20, 2017.



The RAB recently completed review of the following documents:

- SWMU 4 NTCRA After Action Report
- SWMU 1 Revised Operations and Maintenance, Land Use Control, and Long-Term Monitoring Work Plan
- UXO 1, Eastern Conservation Area Remedial Action, Land Use Control, and Long-Term Monitoring Work Plan
- Quality Assurance Project Plan Advanced Geophysical Classification for Munitions Response Remedial Investigations

When technical documents complete all regulatory and RAB reviews and become final, they can be found on the Navy's Vieques website at <http://www.navfac.navy.mil/vieques>. Click on the **Administrative Records** section.

## Munitions Response and Environmental Restoration Update

### Remedial Investigation at UXO 13

A remedial investigation (RI) is ongoing at UXO 13, located in the northwest corner of the former Eastern Maneuver Area (EMA). In addition to characterizing munitions and explosives of concern (MEC) present at the site, soil samples are being collected across UXO 13, as well as groundwater samples and surface water and sediment samples from the site's lagoons. Similar to the RI discussed below, the objectives of the UXO 13 RI are:



Soil sampling at UXO 13

- **To characterize the nature and extent of MEC such that:** (1) the final remedy determinations can be made regarding MEC based on the potential explosive hazard for the planned land use, and (2) environmental media (soil, groundwater, surface water, sediment) can be appropriately characterized.
- **Characterize environmental media to determine the nature and extent of contamination and:** (1) whether site-related contamination, if present, poses unacceptable human health and/or ecological risks, and (2) whether site-related contamination, if present, warrants action to support the planned land use.

### Remedial Investigation Conducted at Portion of UXO 16 (Offshore Area) Adjacent to SWMU 4

The Navy conducted a remedial investigation (RI) within the portion of UXO 16 adjacent to Solid Waste Management Unit 4 (SWMU 4) in July 2016. UXO 16 is the offshore area adjacent to the former ranges and operational areas on East and West Vieques that have or may have been affected by military training activities.

As part of the RI for UXO 16, the Navy collected 37 sediment samples in areas where munitions-related items were found and from background areas to evaluate the nature, extent, and potential human health and ecological risks from constituents that may have been released from munitions associated with the former open burn/open detonation (OB/OD) operations conducted at SWMU 4.

The offshore sediment sample collection focused on areas where the highest densities of munitions-related items were found, areas where munitions residues may have been deposited, and in areas representative of potential recreational use.

No explosives were detected in any sample. Inorganics (metals) concentrations were below risk-based screening criteria or comparable to background concentrations. Results of the sampling will be included in a remedial investigation/feasibility study (RI/FS) report.

### Provide Proposed Plan Comments for SWMU 6 by November 23, 2016

The Proposed Plan summarizes the history and previous investigations at SWMU 6, the removal actions that addressed the debris and associated contamination, the current (post-removal) conditions at the site and how they are protective of human health and the environment, and how the proposal for No Further Action was determined by the Navy and regulatory agencies.

SWMU 6 is located in the northwestern portion of the former Naval Ammunition Support Detachment (NASD). During the 1960s and 1970s, SWMU 6 was used for the disposal of general solid waste from Navy



### Navy Teams Up During Public Servant Day

The third graders of the Monte Santo community school invited personnel from NAVFAC ATL (US Navy) and its contractors USA Environmental and CH2M to participate in their Public Servant Day event on October 14, 2016. The Navy wants to thank Mr. Carlos Cruz, third grade teacher and event organizer for this opportunity.



Live underwater video allows regulatory agencies to oversee sample collection from an observation boat.



Scientific divers conducting sediment sampling and documenting ecological conditions.

operations within the former NASD. Over 1,400 tons of solid waste and contaminated soil were removed during a removal action in 2009. Since that time, a vibrant marine habitat has become established that supports a wide variety of birds, fish, plants, and invertebrates such as the unique upside-down jellyfish (*Cassiopea*). Recent sampling performed in the lagoon demonstrated the newly-established conditions are protective of the ecology and people who may utilize the site for recreational purposes.

Based on the investigations conducted at the site, and completion of the removal action in 2009, the Navy, EPA, and Department of Interior (DOI), in consultation with EQB, which consulted with the DNER, concluded that there are no unacceptable risks associated with unlimited use and unrestricted exposure at the site. Therefore, no further action at SWMU 6 and no restrictions on land use or exposure are necessary.

The Proposed Plan and supporting documents are available for public review online at <http://go.usa.gov/x2mRw>. Paper copies of the Proposed Plan are available at the EPA office in Vieques and the Navy office at Camp Garcia.

Written comments can be sent to:

- **Kevin Cloe**, Remedial Project Manager, (Attn: Code EV31), 6506 Hampton Blvd., Norfolk, VA 23508-1278, email: [kevin.cloe@navy.mil](mailto:kevin.cloe@navy.mil)
- **Juan Babá Peebles**, Federal Facilities Coordinator, Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board, Edificio de Agencias Ambientales Cruz A. Matos, Urbanización San José Industrial Park, Avenida Ponce de León 1375, San Juan, PR 00929-2604, email: [juanbaba@jca.pr.gov](mailto:juanbaba@jca.pr.gov)
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- **Susan Silander**, Refuge Complex Supervisor, US Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 510, Boquerón, PR 00622, email: [Susan\\_silander@fws.gov](mailto:Susan_silander@fws.gov)

## Controlled Burning in the Submunitions Area of Vieques Protects Workers Performing the Cleanup and the Community

Submunitions are small bombs, or “bomblets,” that are released from larger cluster munitions. Within the former bombing range on Vieques, the 75-acre Submunitions Area contains thousands of dangerous submunitions that are lying on the ground surface and are hidden under vegetation. These submunitions are shock-sensitive and may explode if moved or disturbed in any way. This situation poses a very high risk to anyone who may enter the area, including local residents, tourists, wildlife managers, and cleanup workers. In order for cleanup workers to see the submunitions, avoid accidental contact, and clear the submunitions safely, the vegetation must be removed. The Navy has determined that the only safe method for vegetation removal is to conduct small (1 to 2 acre) controlled burns. Extensive air sampling over a period of 8 years with 1,600 air samples collected during 177 detonation events and 19 accidental brush fires, showed no violations of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) or other health based standards. These sample results were supported by air dispersion modeling, which demonstrated that all predicted concentrations in the community were below regulatory and health based standards, such that there was no indication of risk to the residents of Vieques. Both the sampling and modeling confirm that the burn events will comply with air quality standards, and smoke from the burn events will not reach any residences or businesses, which are 8 miles or more from the Submunitions Area. Therefore, controlled burning in the Submunitions Area, which is now underway, is conducted in a manner that is protective of human health and the environment.

## Technology Highlight

### Coffer Dam Will Help Munitions Removal at PI-9 East

Plans are underway for an interim removal action at PI-9 East, a site located within UXO 15 (Península Puerto Ferro), as well as immediately offshore in Puerto Ferro. The removal action will address munitions encrusted in limestone, along the shoreline and just offshore, likely dropped during munitions transfer operations associated with military training activities.



AquaDam® coffer dam example project in California shown to illustrate similar equipment to what may be used during PI-9 East munitions removal in Vieques.

Photo credit: <http://aquadam.net>

## 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.



Many of the munitions requiring removal are underwater and not easily accessible. To safely remove munitions and protect the marine ecology, the area where the removal will be done must be dewatered by installing a water-filled coffer dam along the perimeter. Once the coffer dam is in place, pumps will remove the water and enable workers to safely remove munitions while ensuring there is no impact to the surrounding marine environment. Sediment control systems will also be put in place to control runoff. The interim removal action is expected to take place in 2017.

## Frequently Asked Questions

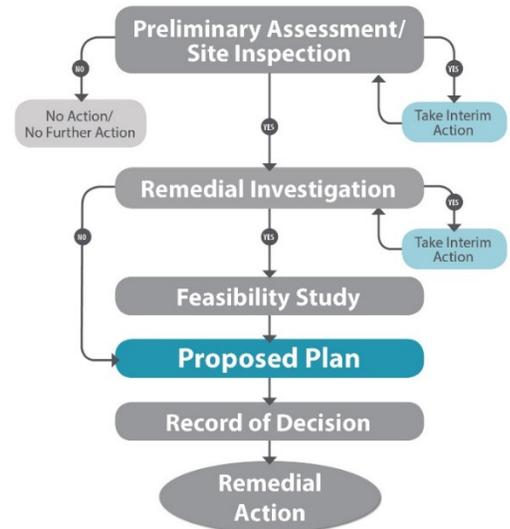
### How and When is Community Input Considered during the Vieques Cleanup Process?

In 1980, Congress established the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, also known as CERCLA or Superfund. CERCLA is a federal program to clean up hazardous-waste sites as well as accidents, spills, and other pollutant and contaminant releases into the environment. Vieques became a Superfund site in 2005.

The Vieques Superfund Community Involvement Program provides community members with information and opportunities to participate as active partners during all phases of site cleanup. Two important CERCLA process opportunities for public participation occur when an Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis (EE/CA) is completed for a non-time-critical removal action (NTCRA), also referred to as an interim action, and a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS), Proposed Plan (PRAP), and Record of Decision (ROD) are completed for a remedial action.

Issuance of an EE/CA and PRAP includes a public notice release and initiation of a public comment period. When issuing a PRAP, a public meeting also is conducted. Based on comments received during the public comment period for a PRAP, the Navy and regulatory agencies may modify the preferred alternative or choose another alternative. Finally, an Action Memorandum for an EE/CA and a Record of Decision (ROD) for a PRAP are issued that describe the removal or remedial action selected (which can include no further action).

In addition to formal public comment period, the CERCLA process provides opportunities for the public to remain informed and provide input on the cleanup process. The Vieques Community Involvement Plan provides more detail about the Navy's community outreach program for environmental restoration and munitions response programs. The document can be found on the **Community Outreach** section on the Navy's Vieques website [www.navfac.navy.mil/vieques](http://www.navfac.navy.mil/vieques).



For a non-time-critical removal action (NTCRA), an Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis (EE/CA) is prepared and issued for public comment prior to implementing the interim action. The Proposed Plan stage of the CERCLA process includes a public comment period during which community input plays an important role in determining final cleanup actions.

## Important Contacts

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