



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. box 510, Carr. 301, Km. 5.1
Boqueron, Puerto Rico 00622

2/4/05-02424



February 4, 2005

Mr. Jeff Harlow
Project Coordinator
Installation Restoration Section
Environmental Program Branch
Environmental Division
Atlantic Division (LANTDIV), Code 182
Naval Facilities Engineering Command
6206 Hampton Blvd.
Norfolk, VA 23508-1278

Re: Removal of Rock Groin South of Green
Beach

Dear Mr. Harlow:

The Fish and Wildlife Service is currently working with the US Army Corps of Engineers and EPA to resolve a Section 404 Clean Water Act violation with the Martineau Bay Hotel on Vieques. This violation resulted from the filling of mangrove wetlands and channelizing a stream that runs through the property. As part of the enforcement action, the hotel must provide adequate mitigation to compensate for wetland losses. Since on site mitigation is not feasible, it was decided to conduct off site mitigation. The majority of the land on Vieques where mitigation could be conducted are managed by the Service and wetlands currently being managed by the Service on the west end of Vieques were chosen as the preferred mitigation site.

Following recommendations made in prior Navy studies and plans for Vieques, the Service recommended the construction of several circulation cuts between the mangrove lagoons north and south of the Green Beach Road (see enclosure 1). In addition we requested the construction of circulation several swales east of SWMU 6 to provide better water movement between those wetland areas. These sites have already been marked with flagging and will be surveyed in the near future. Mr. Daniel Rodriguez from EPA on Vieques has seen these sites as well.

In addition it was recommended that a small rock groin at the entrance channel of Laguna Boca Quebrada, south of Green Beach be removed. This rock groin is currently causing sand to build up at the mouth of Laguna Boca Quebrada, and impeding natural flow. This lagoon was impacted in the 1970's by the construction of a shoreline road and resulted in a large mangrove die-off. A hydrological connection was re-established in

the 1980's. Exactly when the rock groin was built is not known but likely after 1980, it is quite possible that it never had a US Army Corps of Engineers Permit for its construction.

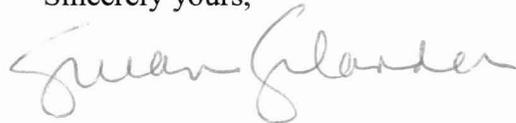
As part of the Refuge's habitat restoration work, this groin would have been removed eventually. To be able to have it removed now would greatly advance the restoration of the mangrove wetlands in the Laguna Boca Quebrada system.

The removal of this structure was cited for immediate action in the 1996 Land Use Management Plan for Vieques (enclosure 2). The work for removal of the rock groin and associated permits will be carried out by a private contractor hired by the current hotel owners. Work is expected to be carried out this spring. This area is currently within the 3000 foot safety arc for SWMU-4, the OB/OD site. The rock groin is about 1500 feet west of the existing OB/OD pits (see enclosure 3).

The above mitigation work will form part of an EPA consent decree with the hotel and part of the special conditions for a US Army Corps of Engineers after the fact permit. As a result, all parties involved are very interested in getting this done. Since this is within the SWMU-4 safety arc, the Service would like to know what support could the Navy offer for this action.

I appreciate your attention in this matter, if you have any questions; please feel free to contact Mr Oscar Diaz at 787 741 2138 or myself in Boqueron at 787 851 7258 x 238.

Sincerely yours,



Susan Silander
Project Leader

Encl (3)

cc:

COE, San Juan

FWS, Vieques

EPA, Vieques

Chris Penny, LANTDIV

Land Use Management Plan
for
U.S. Naval Facilities
Vieques, Puerto Rico

Prepared for:

DEPARTMENT OF NAVY

U.S. Naval Station, Roosevelt Roads

and

Atlantic Division

Naval Facilities Engineering Command

Norfolk, Virginia

Under Contract No. N6470-91-D-9280

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Prepared by:



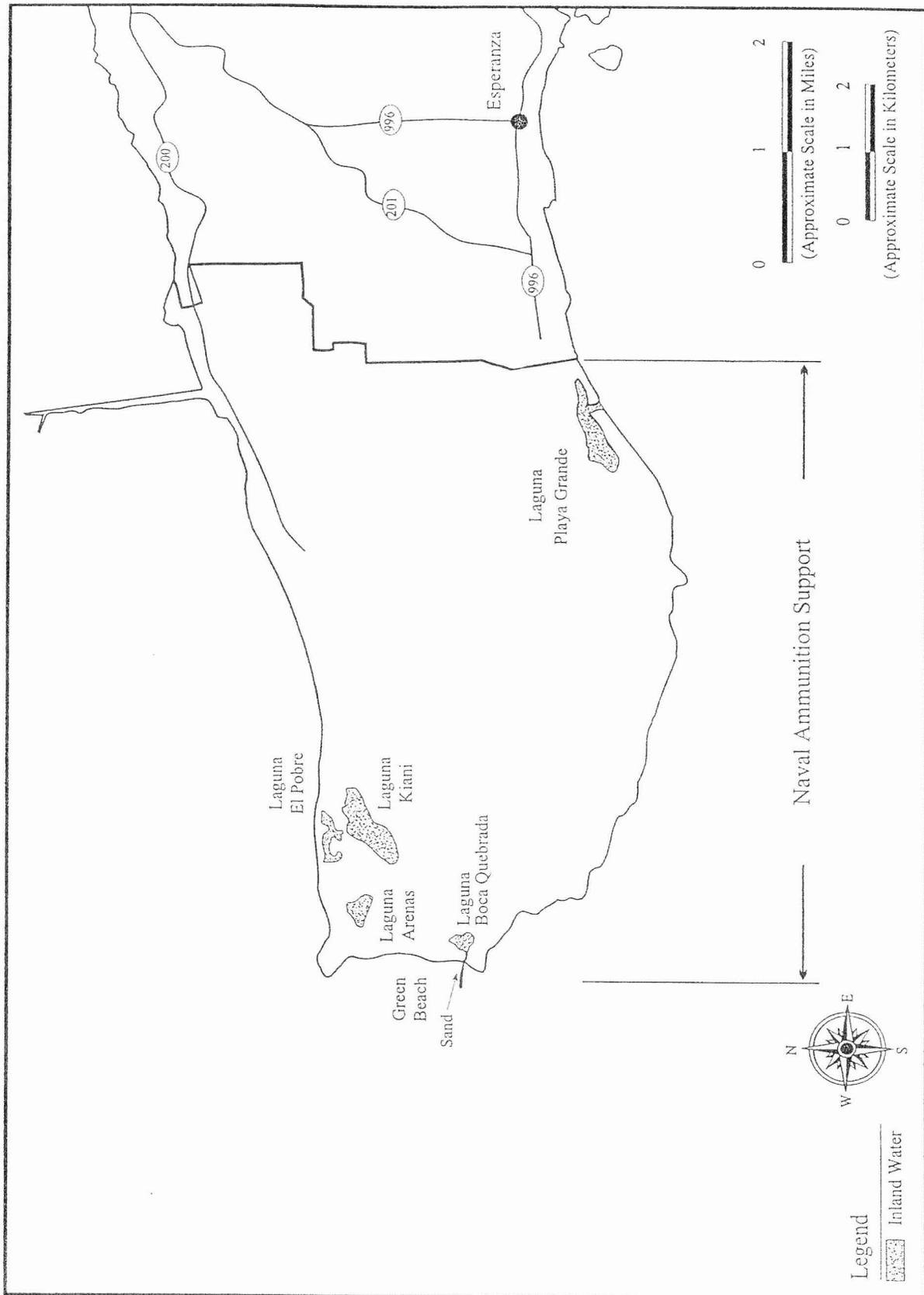
Geo-Marine, Inc.
Baton Rouge, LA
July 1996

3.4.1.3.1 Immediate Action Phase. Two actions should be implemented immediately to reduce adverse effects on mangrove communities that are currently occurring. These are:

1. The riprap groin at the entrance of Laguna Boca Quebrada is trapping sand which results in blockage to the outflow channel from the lagoon (Figure 3-4). The riprap should be removed and the channel reopened to restore tidal circulation. This site should be monitored and sand should be removed as necessary.
2. Complete DNER recreation plans for establishment of a fishing pier and walkways at Laguna Kiani. This will help alleviate some of the pressures on other mangrove systems. Parking areas should be developed to restrict damage to adjacent habitat.

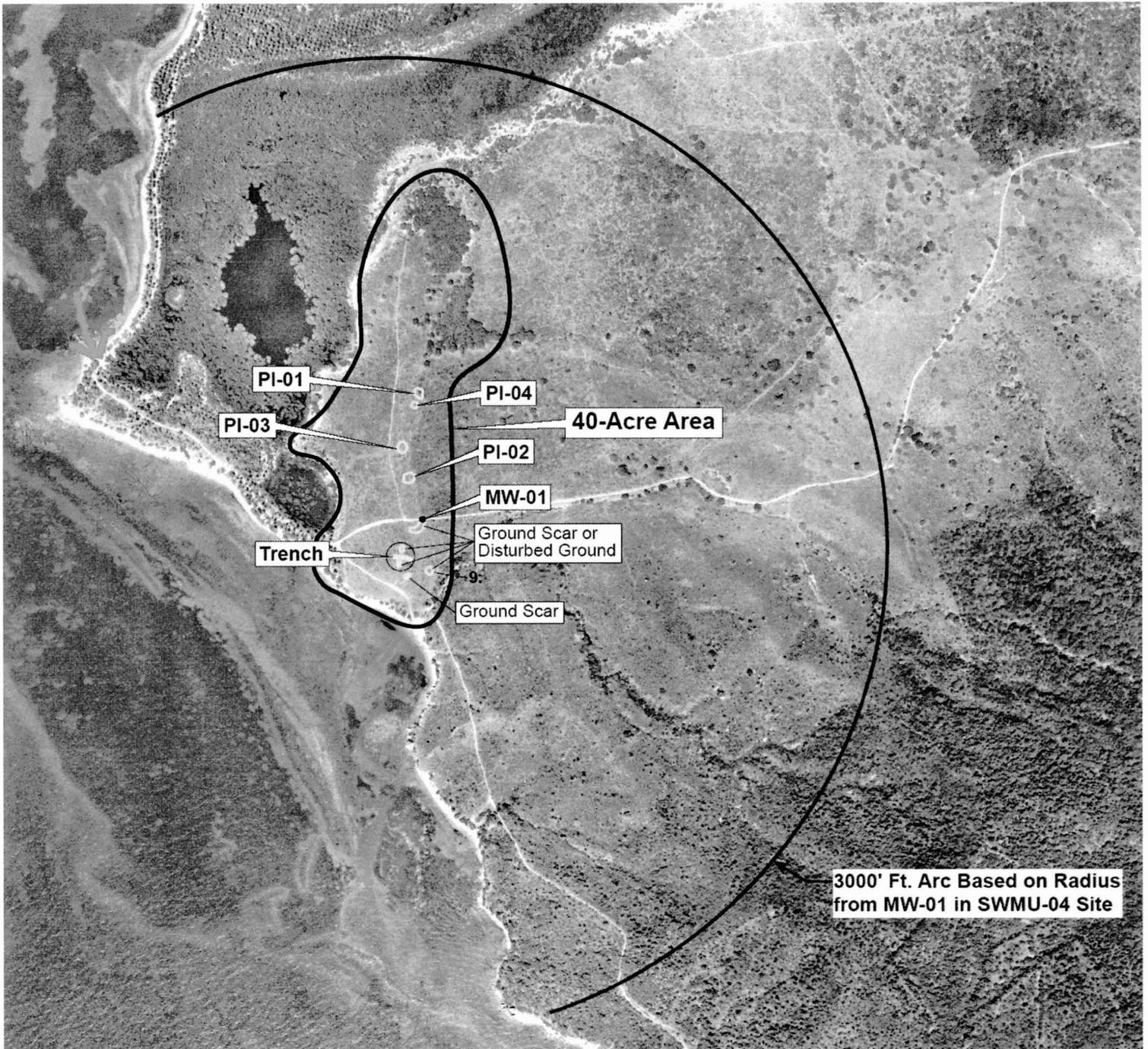
3.4.1.3.2 Short-Term Phase (1 to 10 years). In the short-term, the following activities should be implemented to insure the continued improvement to mangrove forests of Vieques:

1. Restrict horse and cattle access to mangroves and conservation areas on the NASD, EMA, and the AFWTF or remove all livestock from Navy property.
2. The beach road north of Laguna Monte Largo on the AFWTF is in a conservation zone. Use of the road continues to impact the adjacent mangroves. To reduce impacts to the adjacent lagoon the beach road should be realigned south of the lagoon, or large culverts installed and the channel then opened to the sea in order to restore the natural circulation pattern. The road should be realigned at least 61 m (200 ft) from the mangroves and follow existing contours around the toe of the hills.
3. The road that traverses in front of Laguna Puerto Diablo and blocks normal exchange with the ocean should be modified, abandoned, or rerouted. A determination needs to be made concerning the importance of this road to the military mission. If not required, the road should be abandoned and the blockage over the lagoon outlet cleared. If required for the continuation of military activities, the road should be realigned through an upland thorn scrub area at least 61 m (200 ft) back from the mangrove. The road realignment can be constructed using appropriate soil erosion control measures, and box drainage culverts should be properly installed and maintained.



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Figure 3-4. Locations of Lagoons on NASD.



Aerial Photograph Date: 1967

Feature Identifier	Description	Observation Date
PI-01	Ground Scar	1970
PI-02	Probable Stain	1970
PI-03	Probable Stain	1970
PI-04	Liquid	1970
SWMU 04	Ground Scar or Disturbed Ground	1970
SWMU 04	Ground Scar or Disturbed Ground	1970
SWMU 04	Trench	1962, 1964
SWMU 04	Ground Scar or Disturbed Ground	1970
SWMU 04	Ground Scar	1964
SWMU 04	Ground Scar or Disturbed Ground	1970

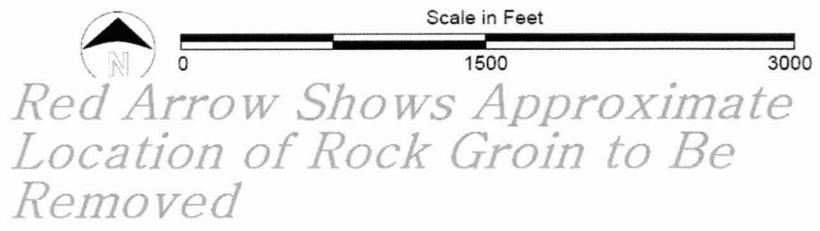


Figure 2-2
Photo-Identified Ground Scar Locations
 Former NASD, West Vieques Island, Puerto Rico

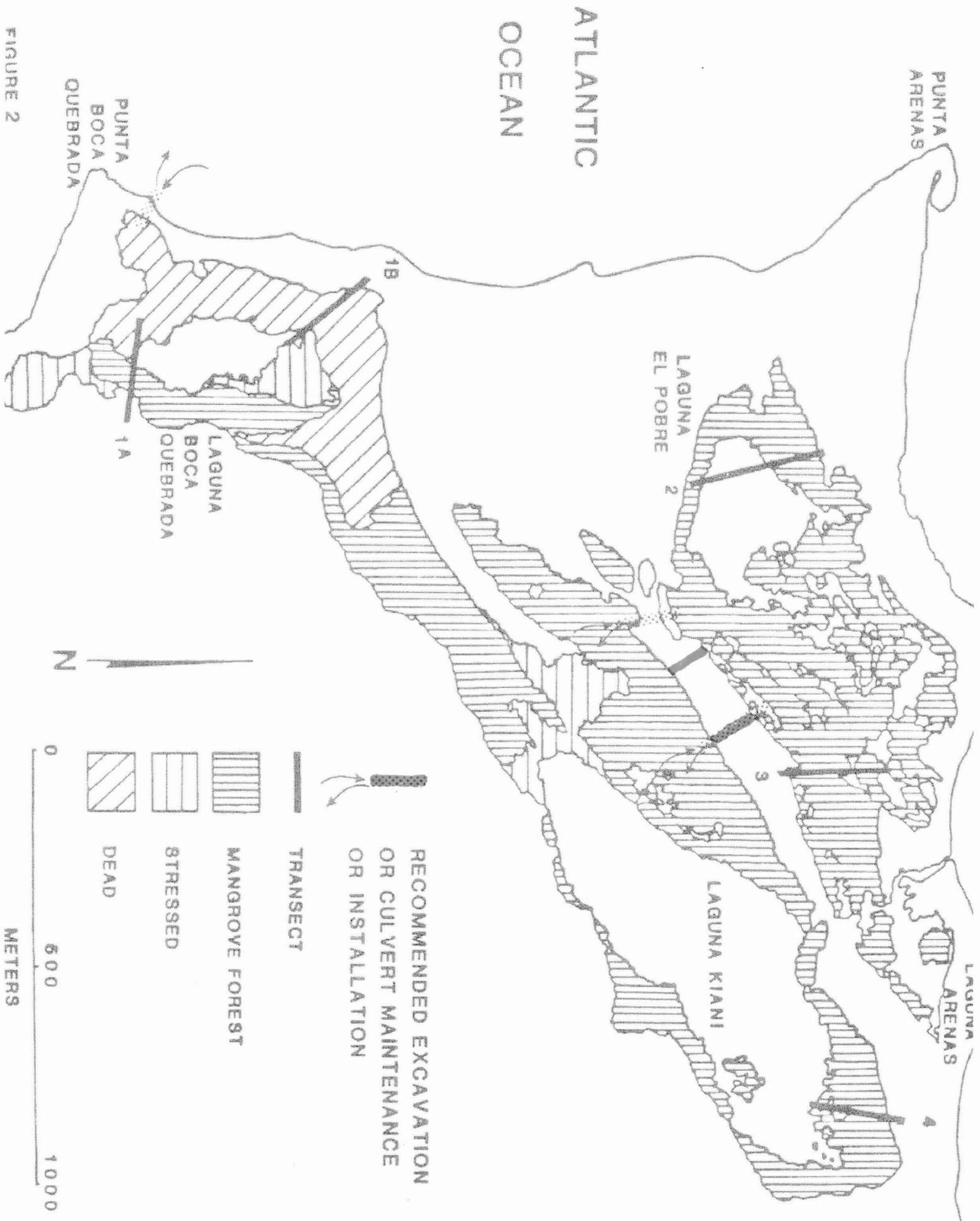


FIGURE 2