



# Vieques Investigation and Cleanup NAVFAC Atlantic

## Restoration Advisory Board (RAB)

Meeting #23  
Wednesday, March 17, 2010  
USFWS Offices - Vieques

### Attendees:

Mike Barandiaran – FWS  
Wanda Bermudez – RAB member  
Kevin Cloe – Navy  
Michael Diaz – RAB member  
Rich Henry – FWS  
Colleen MacNamara – RAB member  
Lirio Márquez – RAB member  
Chris Penny – Navy  
Jorge Fernández Porto – RAB member  
Susan Silander – FWS  
Madeline Rivera – Navy  
Pedro Ruiz – Navy  
Lionell Sánchez – RAB member  
Susana Struve – CH2M HILL

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting began at 6:40PM. Susana Struve (CH2M HILL) welcomed everyone.

Kevin thanked all the RAB members for attending this meeting; he presented the agenda and stated that the main objective of this meeting is to discuss ways to improve our communications with the RAB.

### 2. RAB Administrative Issues

Kevin stated that there are a number of administrative issues we need to discuss so we can improve the RAB process, this include: membership, charter, meeting format, document distribution.

- **Membership:** A letter will be send to all RAB members to get updated information and assess their interest and availability to continue to participate in RAB meetings and follow up with other responsibilities assigned to them as members. The letter will also invite them to continue participating in the RAB process by attending meetings as members of the general public.
- **Charter Update.** Once the membership is re-established. RAB members, Navy and regulatory agencies will work together to enhance the communication process and review and update the charter (which originally states that it needs

reviewed every two years). Much has happened since we signed the charter in 2007, from new regulations under the Federal Facility Agreement signing in 2008, to new communication technology. It is time to get it up to date, so the charter can reflect the current situation of the RAB membership, regulatory processes and communication exchange.

- The Navy will send a charter with suggested edits (in track changes) to the confirmed RAB members for their review and comment.
- **Community Co-Chair.** It will be useful to have a community co-chair so the communication exchange in preparation for meetings and topic identification can be effectively managed. Having one point of contact for the community will make the communication exchange run more smoothly. Chris Penny added there are guidelines we need to follow; we need to have a charter so we can base our administrative decision on an agreed document, and this includes having a Community Co-chair.
  - Jorge Porto Fernandez stated that when there were only 4 members participating, the idea is that the four of us will rotate the “co-chair duties” to help plan the meetings, we have not done that. We will discuss this issue internally and will follow up with this at the next meeting
- **Technical Information.** Do you still want to receive copies of the technical documents? We have not received any comments.
  - **RAB Meeting Format.** How do you want future meetings to be formatted? (Program updates or detailed presentations on a particular technical subject). Wanda Bermudez said that depending on the topic, perhaps a combination of updates and detail information may work.
  - **Subject Meetings.** We could have focus technical meetings for RAB members (outside of the “normal” RAB meetings) if there is a request to discuss a document or a specific issue). These meetings will be in English to make these meetings more efficient. If there is a RAB member who does not understand English well, we can accommodate his/her participation with small interpretation equipment.
  - **Conference calls:** Do we continue with the conference calls? Colleen MacNamara mentioned that in the past the conference calls were useful. Lirio Marquez added that the calls were useful not only to discuss technical issues, but to address questions on documents, rumors, etc.
  - **Technical Assistance to review documents.** There are still TAPP funds remaining; TAG funds have not been considered. The agencies continue to hear that the RAB needs technical assistance but the available resources through federal funding have not been used. The Navy has suggested that the RAB members use EQB consultants to help them with the document review. EQB has consultants who are paid by DSMOA funds that can be made available to assist the RAB. Also EPA and the Navy can have technical experts available to assist in reviewing draft documents.

- Michael Diaz stated that the RAB did not want to use the limited funds allocated the TAPP so they felt that it was better to “save” the money for when the environmental issues are being addressed. We trust the Navy on the munitions removal program, there is so much liability on this process, that we think they are doing a good job to avoid serious issues. That is way we prefer to receive assistance to review the documents related to the environmental investigations, which we think are more important.
- **Field Trips.** It seems that field trips are a good way to show the progress of the clean up and get on site information/feedback and questions from the RAB members. We should consider having more site visits for the RAB.

### **3. Follow up on November 2009 RAB meeting Eastern Conservation Area discussion**

We understand that some of the RAB members met with the regulatory agencies following the last meeting. Now that all the agencies are here, perhaps it is a good time to follow up with these discussions.

- Jorge: We met with Chris Penny (Navy), Susan Silander and Mike Barandiaran from FWS and Danny Rodriguez form EPA (we have not had the opportunity to meet with Wilmarie Rivera from EQB yet). At these separate meetings we discussed the following issues:
  1. Scheduling a RAB site visit to the ECA (Navy)
  2. Developing a map with the location of the sensitive areas (FWS)
  3. Scheduling meeting with the agencies to discuss future work plan for sensitive areas before the work in these areas begin.
  4. From EPA and EQB we asked for a more assertive oversight for the entire process.
  5. Allocation of funds for a biologist/ecologist to evaluate what happened at the ECA before the colonizing species took over. We feel that different approaches need to be taken following the unique characteristics of some areas. FWS should acquire some plants and establish a nursery attempting to restore the area with native plants. What happened at the ECA should not happen again.

Kevin Cloe: We heard your comments and suggestions and we took them personally. We talked among internally and we talked to the agencies about this issue. As a result, the Navy is getting real time feedback from FWS on a regular basis. The communication exchange with all the agencies has been improved and the oversight process enhanced.

### **4. Agencies Update**

**Fish and Wildlife Service.** Rich Henry presented himself and provided attendees an overview of his responsibilities within FWS organization and other agencies. He also explained the roles and responsibilities with the Vieques cleanup project. He explained

the group of the different meetings accomplished to improve communication among F&WS and other agencies so the cleanup could be done with more sensitiveness to all parties involved. He highlighted the improvements accomplished already between his agency and the Navy and thanked the RAB members for their input.

- Susan Silander added that they are also looking into adding more personnel to the site to support the Refuge needs.
- Mike Barandiaran provided a copy of the draft map showing the sensitive areas in the refuge. This map was requested by some of the RAB members during an earlier meeting with FWS. Mike explained that this map is a working tool and is dynamic but additional information can be added as available in the future. He mentioned of the not too distant effort with the University of Puerto Rico to do a survey of the ECA impacted area from the vegetation clearance as part of the cleanup. This site visit is planned for April/May time frame.

**Environmental Quality Board.** Wilmarie Rivera gave a summary of the oversight work done by EQB, including document review and site visits.

She mentioned about a protest held a week before in front of their office in San Juan regarding the opposition to the controlled burning permit requested by the Navy.

## **5. Meeting Closing (Susana Struve/CH2M HILL)**

The next meeting will be schedule around mid may. More information will be distributed before the meeting and a conference call will be scheduled to get the RAB input on the agenda for the next meeting.