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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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PUBLIC MEETING REGARDING
PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE FORMER POWER PLANT
in Western Vieques, Puerto Rico
(Area of Concern AOCH)

(Transcript of English proceedings and simultaneous
interpretation of Spanish proceedings)

Date: February 7, 2008, 5:00 p.m.

Place: Centro de Usos Múltiples
Antonio G. Mellado St.
Vieques, Puerto Rico

Moderator: SUSANA STRUVE

FASYO REPORTERS - English and Spanish
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PROCEEDINGS

1 MS. STRUVE: (Through the interpreter) Susan Struve,
2 opening--- the west Vieques area of concern H proposed plan.

3 MR. DOER: Hi, my name is Brett Doer, I'm with CH2M
4 Hill, we're the Navy's environmental restoration program
5 contractor for--- for Vieques.

6 The purpose of tonight's public meeting is to present
7 the--- what is referred to as a proposed plan for area of
8 concern H. The proposed plan summarizes a history of the site,
9 the work that's been done there, the environmental
10 investigations that have been done, the evaluation of the data
11 that's taken place, the conclusions that were drawn based on
12 those data, and then, the ultimate recommendations. So that's
13 what we're going to cover.

14 In the back of the room, there is a stack of proposed
15 plans, one stack in English, one stack in Spanish, there's also
16 a few Cds, if folks want to take an electronic copy home with
17 them; so, hopefully, each one of you should be able to pick one
18 of the proposed plan. This goes into much more detail than I go
19 in tonight.

20 Really, really, this meeting is for the public to---
21 if you have any particular questions or comments, you want to
22 talk about this, it's--- it's not so much designed for me to
23 stand up here and--- and--- and read this to you, or explain
24 the whole thing to you.

25

1 I'm really just going to kind of touch on some of some of
2 the highlights that are contained in the proposed plan. The
3 proposed plan is a summary of what's happened in the past.
4 There's much more detail in the documents that this proposed
5 plan references, and primarily, a remedial investigation report
6 that is available in the public depository.

7 The--- this public meeting will be recorded, a
8 transcript will be produced from the--- ah--- from the
9 recording, and that transcript will be included as an appendix
10 to the record of decision. That will be the next step from this
11 process. The proposed plan, as the same implies, is what the
12 agencies are proposing to do with this particular site. That is
13 formalized in what is referred to as a record of decision, also
14 known as the ROD. The transcript from this public meeting will
15 be included as appendix to that ROD.

16 In addition to that, responses to sev--- to comments
17 that are received during--- questions and comments that are
18 received during the forty five day public comment period will
19 also be included as an appendix to the record of decision.

20 You know, feel free to ask questions as I go through
21 this. You don't need to hold questions or comments till the
22 end, if you--- if you'd like to--- to discuss anything or
23 comment anything as I go through, please, just raise your hand
24 and we'll do it. The only thing I ask you is, because this
25 being recorded, and a transcript is going to be prepared from

1 this, we will need to identify who the speaker is, so each time
2 the microphone changes hands, please, state your name for the
3 record, and then, ask your question. OK.?

4 OK. The AOC, area of concern, we also refer to as
5 AOC, AOC H was a former power plant. It--- it--- a very--- a
6 sort of very small size power plant, it only occupied an area
7 of about a half an acre, from 1941 to '43, they used it to
8 house power generation equipment, so the--- you know, they had
9 generators, they had--- ah--- they were diesel generators, so
10 they had the diesel tanks that--- that they used to power the
11 generators. That all ended in 1943. Didn't really last that
12 long. In '43, everything was kind of cleared out of there. They
13 took all the equipment out, and the buildings and the
14 surrounding areas are vacant--you know--for almost twenty
15 years.

16 In the 1960s--- from the 1960s to part of the 1980s,
17 they used the building as fire training. What they were trying
18 to do is simulate--- ah--- what a structural fire would be
19 like, and so, they put tires inside the building, doused them
20 with a fuel, and set them on fire, and they would put them out.

21 Next slide.

22 This is--- this picture on the right is--- This is
23 what the site looks like currently. I think we took this
24 picture--- I don't know, a few weeks ago. The area's been---
25 been cleared off, and you can see there--- there's the old---

ah--- the old power plant building. It's a very small, concrete building, dirt floor inside.

The site here is shown--- This will show you where the site is relative to west Vieques. Everything over here is the former naval ammunition support detachment, also sometimes referred to as NASD, also sometimes referred to as west Vieques, shows you where all the other environmental sites are out there, shows the various property owners, and here's AOC H, just north of route 200, very close to the--- This whole main operational area, which is now public works area.

One more down on this one, John.

Ah, no, no, go back to the--- Yes.

This is an aerial photograph taken in 1994, just showing the proximate area. Here's the ocean highway 200, and the little cleared area's where you see H is. And this is a little ephemeral stream that runs down. That doesn't connect to the ocean. The beach provides--- basically, it becomes--- a sandbar blocks the entrance of this little ephemeral stream. But usually is water down in that ditch.

OK.

And let's on to the next one. OK.

Number of investigations took place at the site over the years. In 2000, the Navy conducted an environmental baseline survey. The primary purpose of the environmental baseline survey was to evaluate the conditions of all the Navy

1 property, in preparation for the transfer that was going to
2 take place.

3 At that time, they--- they did take some PCB wipe
4 samples--- ah--- There--- there is really no record of whether
5 there was transformers there, in the building, or not, but in
6 the--- in the chance that there was transformers there, they---
7 Sometimes, transformers contain PCBs, they wanted to do a PCB
8 sampling, so they took wipe samples inside the building. It's
9 a cloth material you wipe on the--- on the concrete, to see if-
10 -- ah--- there's any PCB residue. And they didn't detect any
11 then.

12 They also began what was referred to as expanded
13 preliminary assessment site investigation. During that
14 investigation, they installed a number of monitoring wells, and
15 they collected surface and subsurface soil samples, and they
16 collected ground water samples from the monitoring wells. We'll
17 talk about the data in the subsequent slide.

18 They also conducted an ecological survey. They went
19 out there EE College went out there, looked at the layout of
20 the land, looked to see if there was viable habitat, looked for
21 stressed vegetation, looked for any potential impacts on the
22 ecology, and looked to see if there's any protected or
23 endangered species out there. They didn't identified any---
24 any--- that there were any ecological impacts at the site.

25 And to--- But throughout this process, a full

remedial investigation was recommended. Primary purpose of the
1 remedial investigation is to further evaluate the nature and
2 extent of contaminants, and then, to perform full quantitative
3 human health and ecological risks assessments.

4 And so, that work was done in 2003. As part of that,
5 the remedial investigation, they installed two more wells, they
6 took some more soil samples, they took surface water and
7 sediment samples from that ephemeral stream adjacent to the
8 site.

9 OK.

10 And this is what they found. In a nutshell, and
11 it's--- Much more detail is provided in the remedial
12 investigation report, if you're interested in looking at the
13 details of every single sample that was collected out there.
14 But in a nutshell, very little levels of constituents were
15 identified, and very few of them were likely contaminants.

16 We did find a few--- ah--- volatile organic
17 compounds, semi volatile organic compounds, some pesticides,
18 but very few of what was found actually exceeded screening
19 criteria. And when I say screening criteria, the several types
20 of screening criteria that you screen data against; there's
21 ecological values, there's human health values, there's what's
22 called soil screening levels, that's leeching the ground water,
23 screening criteria.

24 And the reason you compare the screening criteria is
25

1 to determine whether you should do a further evaluation. Simply
2 exceeding screening criteria doesn't mean that there is a
3 problem. It just means you should do a little bit more
4 quantitative evaluation before you come to your conclusions.

5 So, there were a few things in the surface soil that
6 exceeded some screening criteria. In ground water, there was a
7 few that exceeded screening criteria as well, and very little,
8 not much, in the surface water sediment.

9 Nonetheless, the data were then taken and full,
10 quantitative human health and ecological risk assessments were
11 performed.

12 You want to go on to the next slide, please?

13 A risk assessment evaluates several what they call
14 scenarios. Those scenarios may never, ever existed at the site,
15 but are done so that you can ensure that any potential use of
16 that site is evaluated. So, for example, you look at
17 recreational use. If the site was going to be used in a--- you
18 know, by recreators; they come out there and go to a pick-nick,
19 or they play in the ephemeral stream, if you were building
20 construction on the site; if you were to have a residence,
21 actually move in and build a house, and live there; if you were
22 to have--- if it was to, say, stay as a protected area, but you
23 had periodic maintenance work that's done there; or if you were
24 to construct an industrial facility, a strip mall, or some
25 business there, and it was going to be used for industry.

1 So you look at those kind of exposures, those various
2 scenarios, and the kinds of the media that you'd be exposed to,
3 so if a recreational user was there, that recreational user can
4 come in contact with the soil, when they're picnicking, they
5 could come in contact with the surface water and sediment of
6 the ditch, if you were going to live there, you could come in
7 contact with everything, the soil, the ground water. A resident
8 could also become exposed to the surface water sediment, but
9 the recreational user was--- a recreational user to evaluate
10 that exposure halfway.

11 So you look at all those different exposure
12 scenarios, you take the chemicals that were detected, the
13 concentrations that were detected, and you perform a human
14 health risk assessment.

15 When all was done, and the details are in the
16 remedial investigation report, when all that work report was
17 done, what they found was, in the use, they use risk levels
18 that are provided by EPA. These are EPA wide levels of what
19 they call risk levels that you compare that--- the value that
20 you get at your site to determine whether the risks are either
21 acceptable for those various scenarios, or unacceptable.

22 And based on the risk assessment, that was done to
23 determine that the potential risk of that site, relative to
24 those of the background, were--- they were acceptable for
25 unrestricted use. So is--- The resident exposure is the most---

1 is--- is the most conservative of all--- of all the risk
2 assessments done. If you pass the residential scenario, the
3 risks for residential scenario are acceptable, and then, your
4 ecological risks are acceptable, the site can then be released
5 for unrestricted use.

6 From the human health standpoint, the risks of the
7 residential scenario were acceptable.

8 Next slide.

9 As I said, a quantitative ecological risk assessment
10 was done as well. Part of that included going to the site,
11 evaluating the site, would--- does the site provide viable
12 habitat, and it certainly does. I think you saw the picture
13 earlier, it's a fairly lush vegetation in that area. It had
14 been cleared, but--- but the jungle was fairly lush in that
15 area, and it provides good habitat for both terrestrial as well
16 as aquatic or semi aquatic animals in that area, plants and
17 animals.

18 The--- what they did was--- The risk assessment was
19 done, they looked at direct exposure, in other words, if plants
20 and animals were directly exposed to contaminants, whether it's
21 in the soil, or in the surface water sediment. They also looked
22 at food web exposures, in other words, some lower order animal
23 eats contaminated material, and then, something else eats that,
24 and then, something else eats that, and finally--you know--a
25 bird is eating that, so that's called the food web, and they

look at those exposures as well.

1 Under both those scenarios, the risks that they
2 identified were--again--within those acceptable levels.

3 Next slide, please.

4 So, after evaluating all that information, after
5 looking at the risk assessments that were done, and in
6 conjunction with the Navy, EPA and EQB worked together on this,
7 and consulted with municipality, it was determined that there
8 were no unacceptable risks relative to the background for
9 unrestricted use at the site, and therefore, based on that,
10 because there were no unacceptable risks, decided and
11 recommended for no action.

12 I think that may be the last slide. Is it? Yes.

13 So, I know this is sort of short and sweet, but
14 again, I really wanted to make it--- give folks in the audience
15 the opportunity to provide any comment or ask any questions.
16 Hopefully, we can answer them.

17 I'm going to give me this, and then, please, state
18 your name.

19 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: There isn't any.

20 MR. DOER: Oh, there's no one? OK.

21 MR. OJEDA: José Ojeda, for the record. You said that
22 the tests were made on the square area, right here, that shows
23 on the picture, right? How about the area around it?

24 MR. DOER: Well---

25

1 MR. OJEDA: How about outside the square? How about
it?

2 MR. DOER: This is Brett Doer, from CH2M, responding
3 to the question.

4 The way an investigation works to determining the
5 nature and extent of your contamination is you start where your
6 potential releases took place. You start where the
7 contamination may have started, and you work your way out, to
8 determine how far out contamination goes.

9 At this particular site, it didn't find the
10 contamination was migrating away from the power plant area. So
11 there--- there--- you know, if--- if there was indication that
12 the contamination was migrating outside that square area, they
13 would have gone outside the square area. But the contamination--
14 -- you know, the data did not suggest the contamination was
15 migrating beyond the power plant area.

16 MR. OJEDA: And how about if it was the other way? If
17 the point of contamination--José Ojeda again, I'm sorry--came
18 from another point, you would have notice, then, inside the AOC
19 that the things happening?

20 I mean, if it was on the outside, the point of
21 contamination, not in the square area of the AOC, as you name
22 it, would you notice that too?

23 MR. DOER: This is Brett Doer, from CH2M, again
24 responding.

25

1 The sampling proceeds from where the suspected source
2 of contamination is, so you go back and you look at historical
3 records. At this site, there were--- they--- they used--- it
4 was very specific at what the site was used for they had--you
5 know--power generation equipment, they knew what that equipment
6 was, they put tires inside the building and set them on fire,
7 so you know where your source of contamination is, and so,
8 that's where you start.

9 With respect to if there was something off your
10 site--you know--over here, somehow contaminating, you do
11 account for things like that, because you take what's called
12 background samples, so you put a well in, upgrading of your
13 site, that's referred to as a background well, so you do
14 compare the data you're taking at your site to what may be
15 upgrading of your site, or--you know--off-site somewhere else,
16 to give you that relative comparison.

17 MR. OJEDA: And you said that this structure was built
18 to give light--- ah--- electricity to a nearby community,
19 right? On 1943, something like that, right?

20 MR. DOER: The information--- This is Brett Doer
21 again. The information that I have says that there was power
22 generation equipment stores at this facility. Does anybody know
23 whether this facility's actually been used to generate power?
24 I'm not sure.

25 MS. CORRADA: I have some historical--- Cristina

Corrada. I have some interesting--- (through the interpreter)
1 This was used--- this was used as an electrical generator
2 plant, because there was a huge sugar mill, the Valle Grande
3 sugar mill, of the Benítez family, and they used that to
4 generate electricity for the sugar mill, and so, once the Navy-
5 -- the sugar mills were already in financial crisis, and they
6 expropriated people towards Monte Santo and Santa María, so it
7 became obsolete, that electrical generator.

8 MR. OJEDA: OK. And how about this---? Any other
9 structure, besides this one, that was built to give electricity
10 to that area, or just this building that is shown on the
11 picture? Any other structure coming out from it? Any poles?
12 Any---? Something---? Cables? Something? No? Not at all?

13 (Several people speak away from the microphone; the
14 record is unintelligible.)

15 MS. CORRADA: (Through the interpreter) The sugar
16 mills had their generators, the only way of generating
17 electricity. I don't know what to answer, because I have no
18 more detail of that.

19 BRETT DOER: This is Brett Doer again. At this
20 particular site, there's no other structures left, other than
21 the shell of the building.

22 MR. OJEDA: You said that it was in consult with mayor
23 office here, in Vieques, the comment from them, they're on the-
24 -- on the--- "en el informe", they appear? The report?
25

MR. DOER: This is Brett Doer again. The comment---

1 MR. OJEDA: Is this from the mayor, or is there any
2 comments at all?

3 MR. DOER: This proposed plan was provided to the
4 municipality, not--- not mayor. It went to the municipality of
5 Vieques. We have a contact with the municipality, was provided
6 to them, and at the same time, we provided it to the regulators
7 for their consideration. And we set a deadline for the--- any
8 comments to come back, we received comments from EPA and EQB,
9 which ultimately were incorporated into this proposed plan.

10 We didn't receive any comments from the municipality.
11 We called them back, and asked again if we were going to get
12 any comments back, we didn't get a response from them.

13 Now, they still have--- This public comment period
14 goes through March 12. If the municipality wants to provide any
15 additional comments, they certainly can through that period. We
16 have not yet rece--- we have not received any comments from the
17 municipality on this. But they're going to be given an
18 opportunity to comment.

19 MR. OJEDA: OK., they have time. But how about the---
20 from outside the municipality of Vieques? Any other public
21 office that you reach out and, even if you have or not, haven't
22 received any answer from them? Any other office?

23 MR. DOER: Yes, this is Brett Doer again. Let me
24 explain how this was sent out. The--- Once the agencies all
25

1 agree to what the content of this proposed plan would be, it
2 was put in the administrative record, which is available to the
3 public, and notice was published in the paper, that anybody
4 that would read a paper knows that this is out there and
5 available for review. We contacted RAV members and let them
6 know as well, and I think there may be some other ways that
7 some message got that this was out there now, and ready for
8 review.

9 I'm unaware of any comments received today. Now,
10 people have, obviously, until March 12, in the postmarked
11 comments by March 12, so there's still plenty of time left. The
12 public comment period just started a week or so ago, not that
13 long ago. Maybe two weeks ago.

14 I don't--- I haven't heard anything about--- I don't
15 think the Navy received any comments. I don't know if the
16 regulators received comments or not. On here, on the proposed
17 plan, it says who you can send comments to; EQB and EPA and the
18 Navy, and it sounds like nobody has yet received any comments.

19 MR. OJEDA: No, Natural Resources Department,
20 Departamento de Recursos Naturales, no?

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: (Through the interpreter) Good
22 evening, Daniel Rodríguez, with the federal Environmental
23 Protection Agency.

24 (Without the interpreter) The document was only
25 distributed within the agencies. That was EQB, Fish and

Wildlife and EPA. We all--- And the municipality of Vieques.

1 We all provided comments, the municipality of Vieques
2 has not provided comment yet, but they were given an
3 opportunity with the document was at draft stage. At that time,
4 only the involved agencies get to review the document. After
5 that, notice was published--I think it was January 24--and went
6 out for public comment on the 28th.

7 So the general public, and also include the agencies,
8 if somebody missed something, have an opportunity to provide
9 comments. And that will close on March 12. At that time, we
10 will look at the comments, and EPA will make a decision whether
11 we need to modify the proposed plan, and perhaps change the
12 selected alternative.

13 If substantial comments are received, or data that
14 indicates that the decision reached was not the most adequate
15 one--- And we will republish that, if it comes to that. If we
16 receive comments, and they're not substantial, we may finalize
17 the document, and note the comment in the administrative
18 record.

19 MR. OJEDA: And--- José Ojeda again.

20 And how about any Vieques community organizations? I
21 know that you guys maybe distribute this around Vieques
22 community, but how about reaching them directly, I mean, with
23 them? Any community organization that you would---? I mean,
24 that it was contact straight, direct to make comments or
25

something?

1 MR. DOER: This is Brett Doer again.

2 Not that I'm aware of. The process that was followed
3 is a standard process that's followed on--basically--all
4 superfund sites, where you announce it in the paper, you
5 provide as much public notice as you can tell people where it
6 is, so they can get it, and anybody has access to it.

7 Go ahead.

8 MS. RIVERA: Madeline Rivera, from the Navy.

9 Giovanni, these documents were also mailed to the RAV
10 members this week, so community does have copies. We have been
11 posting them in different offices at Fish and Wildlife, EPA, so
12 they do have some copies. Some groups in the community already
13 have received comments in recommend up the comp--- the proposed
14 plan document directly.

15 And also, we have published a filer, that is
16 something that goes every month, they have told people where to
17 get the documents, we have posted at the electronic library in
18 Vieques, and there's also a website where they can access that.

19 MR. DOER: Are there any other questions or comments?

20 OK., I think we'll officially close the public
21 meeting, then. And I think we'll have just about an hour, and
22 start the RAV meeting at 7:00 p.m.

23 MS. STRUVE: Everybody's welcome to stay.

24 (Whereupon the proceedings were concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

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I, Juan C. Velázquez, E.R. Reporter, member of FASYO Reporters, do hereby CERTIFY:

That the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the recording of proceedings held at the time and place hereinabove set forth; and;

That I am not related by blood or marriage to any of the parties in the above-captioned matter, nor am I in any way interested in the outcome of the same.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, this 13th day of March 2008.

Juan C. Velázquez
JUAN C. VELAZQUEZ

E.R. REPORTER

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