

Vieques RCRA Field Investigation



Community Involvement Plan

1. Overview

1.1 A Common Goal

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in consultation with Navy, the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI), and the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (EQB), developed its draft Community Involvement Plan (CIP) to facilitate two-way communication and coordination of activities with communities affected by and interested in the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility and Eastern Maneuver Area (AFWTF and EMA) cleanup on Vieques Island, Puerto Rico under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). Through an open and transparent process, EPA encourages all stakeholders to participate in the community involvement process and site activities. In the development of this plan, EPA received public input in the form of community interviews, public meetings, participation in Technical Review Committee (TRC) meetings, and through communication with local elected officials and community organizations.

As a part of the community involvement process, this document will be released for public review and modified based on comments received by interested parties and stakeholders. It is the goal of EPA that this document, once finalized based on comments from the public, will represent the views and meet the needs of all stakeholders.

1.2 Introduction

The Site

Vieques Island lies about seven miles southeast of the main island of Puerto Rico. Vieques Island is 33,000 acres (52 square miles) and has approximately 9,106 residents. Most residents live in and around the towns of Isabel Segunda on the north shore and Esperanza on the south shore.

The U.S. Navy's operations were located on approximately 14,700 acres (23 square miles) of the eastern side of Vieques. The Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility (AFWTF) operated on 3,600 acres of the eastern tip of the island and the Eastern Maneuver Area (EMA) operated on 11,000 acres contiguous with the AFWTF and located on the east-central portion of the island.

The Navy also previously operated on 8,000 acres of the western end of the island, known as the Naval Ammunition Support Detachment (NASD). The NASD was formerly used to store ammunition and ordnance used by the Atlantic Fleet and contained public works facilities to support Navy activities. On April 30, 2001, the Navy transferred about 4,000 acres of the former NASD property to the Municipality of Vieques; 3,100 acres to the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI); and about 800 acres to the Puerto Rico Conservation Trust. The remaining lands on Eastern Vieques were transferred to DOI on May 1, 2003. The DOI lands

EPA: United States Environmental Protection Agency
CIP: Community Involvement Plan
DOI: U.S. Department of the Interior
EQB: Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board

AFWTF: Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility. An area containing 3,600 acres on the eastern tip of Vieques formerly operated by the Navy.

RCRA: Resource Conservation and Recovery Act

EMA: Eastern Maneuver Area. An area containing 11,000 acres contiguous with the AFWTF and located on the east-central portion of the island.

TRC: Technical Review Committee. A group of residents, engineers and scientists advised by a technical expert that works with the Navy and EPA on resolving issues related to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act cleanup of Vieques.

NASD: Naval Ammunition and Support Detachment. The area formerly used by the Atlantic Fleet to store ammunition / ordnance and contained public works facilities to support Navy activities.

FWS: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

LANTDIV: The Naval Facilities Engineering Command Atlantic Division

are now managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge. The Naval Facilities Engineering Command Atlantic Division (LANTDIV) is now responsible for environmental and munitions response activities on the now former Navy lands. In addition, the Navy's Atlantic Fleet continues to occupy about 100 acres on the western side of the island, where communications facilities are located.

Consent Order

RCRA: Resource Conservation and Recovery Act

RFI: RCRA Facility Investigation

In January 2000, EPA and the Navy entered into an Administrative Order on Consent under RCRA to address potential environmental contamination at the AFWTF and EMA. Under the order, the Navy will perform a Facility Investigation (RFI) to fully determine the nature and extent of any releases of hazardous materials from or at the EMA and AFWTF.

SWMU: Solid Waste Management Units

AOC: Area of Concern

The Consent Order requires the investigation of nine Solid Waste Management Units (SWMUs) and three Areas of Concern (AOCs). These SWMUs and AOCs are located on the AFWTF and EMA; many are on Camp Garcia, which is part of the EMA. If the investigation finds releases of hazardous materials that could threaten human health and/or the environment, the order requires the Navy to perform a cleanup to address the contamination. Additional suspected areas have already been identified and could be added, if preliminary study shows that a release of hazardous materials may have occurred elsewhere.

The Community

The residents of Vieques have shown a great deal of interest in the potential cleanup of the former U.S. Navy Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility. EPA's community involvement activities on Vieques began in 1998. Since then, a variety of strategies such as resident interviews, observations of sampling activities, public meetings, and public information sessions have been implemented to address concerns and issues, as well as to keep residents involved in the decision-making process.

EPA has worked with community leaders and groups like Comité Pro Rescate y Desarrollo de Vieques, Alianza de Mujeres Viequenses, Comité por la Descontaminación de Vieques, and Vieques Historic Conservation Trust. In addition, EPA is preparing a permanent office with an EPA staff employee on the island to manage EPA activities and serve as primary point of contact for all local stakeholders. In this way, EPA can respond quickly to any concerns and ensure the cleanup is being performed in an efficient and responsible manner.

1.3 Future Involvement

The Community Involvement Plan

This CIP attempts to address the needs of stakeholders by providing methods for releasing information and opportunities for public involvement through interaction between the public, EPA staff, and management, on cleanup activities on Vieques under RCRA.

Community members will continue to be given significant opportunities for both formal and informal input on a wide variety of issues. It is important to note, that statutes and regulations do not allow the Agency to delegate authority to citizen groups or other outside interests.

Restoration Advisory Board

RAB: Restoration Advisory Board

DoD: Department of Defense

As a complement to the public outreach and involvement activities included in this CIP, a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) will be formed by EPA in consultation with the Navy for the cleanup activities covered under RCRA at the AFWTF and EMA. This RAB will closely follow the guidelines jointly developed by EPA and the Department of Defense (DoD) called "Management Guidance for Execution of the FY 94/95 and Development of the FY 96 Defense Environmental Restoration Program," April 14, 1994.

RABs bring together people who reflect the diverse interests within the local community, enabling the early and continued flow of information between the affected community, Navy and environmental oversight agencies. The RABs ensure that all stakeholders have a voice and can actively participate in a timely and thorough manner in the review of restoration documents. RAB community members will provide advice to the decision-makers as individuals. It is a forum to be used for the expression and careful consideration of diverse points of view. The RAB complements other community involvement efforts, but does not replace them. The Navy will continue to be responsible for fulfilling all public involvement requirements of RCRA. The RAB for the RCRA cleanup will serve as the community advisory group for the project.

Consistent with the RAB guidance, the Technical Review Committee created to provide a forum for community involvement related to Navy activities on the Western end of Vieques will be considered in forming the RAB. Members of the existing technical review committee will be given preference for a seat on the RAB to preserve continuity and the "institutional history" of the restoration process. This should be balanced against the preeminent need to form a RAB truly representative of the community's diverse interests.

Although the Navy has the responsibility for the formulation and implementation of the RAB, EPA, as appropriate, will be involved in all phases of RAB planning and operation. The RAB and the CIP could be modified once a final

determination is made on the Puerto Rico government's request for portions of Vieques and Culebra to be added to the Superfund National Priorities List.

Resources

The CIP is a blueprint for public involvement in the cleanup of Eastern Vieques. It is a companion to a number of site reports, plans, decision documents, and other sources of information that are and will be available for review. Because EPA does not yet have the information necessary to identify the precise timing of all activities and points for community involvement, this CIP will evolve as the project progresses and will be updated based on feedback from stakeholders.

2. Site Background

2.1 Site History

The training areas on Vieques were in use since World War II when the Navy acquired title to the land. The AFWTF provided facilities for naval gunfire support and air-to-ground ordnance delivery training for Atlantic Fleet ships, North American Treaty Organization (NATO) ships, air wings, and smaller air units from other allied nations and the Puerto Rican National Guard. The Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, conducted training for Marine amphibious units, battalion landing teams, and combat engineering units in the EMA. On occasion, Naval units of allied nations with a presence in the Caribbean and the Puerto Rican National Guard also utilized the EMA.

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

PREQB: Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board

SWMU: Solid Waste Management Units

AOC: Area of Concern

2.2 RCRA Facility Investigation (RFI)

The Navy is currently conducting the RFI required by the RCRA order under EPA oversight and in cooperation with EQB. The objectives of the investigation are to supplement data collected during previous investigations concerning the potential contamination at the SWMUs and AOCs at the EMA and AFWTF. The investigation will also make recommendations for additional action or no further action for each site, based on that data.

The Phase 1 RFI will focus on potential contamination at the nine identified SWMUs and three AOCs shown on Figure 1-2 and described in Table 1-1:

TABLE 1-1
Description of Sites

Area	Area Name	Description of Area
SWMU 1	Camp Garcia Landfill	Approximate 55-acre landfill used from 1954-1978 to dispose of construction debris, scrap metal and food packaging
SWMU 2	Fuels Off-Loading Site (Camp Garcia)	Former location of four 20,000-30,000-gallon above-ground storage tanks (ASTs) and pipelines used to store diesel fuel and gasoline
SWMU 4	Waste Areas of Building 303 (Camp Garcia)	Waste areas include: a spent battery accumulation area, a hydraulic oil catch basin, degreasing basin and waste rag storage area
SWMU 5	Spent Battery Accumulation Area (Observation Post 1, Inner Range, AFWTF)	An outside storage area for waste batteries
SWMU 6	Waste Oil and Paint Accumulation Area (Seabees Area, Camp Garcia)	Area used to store 55-gallon drums of waste oil and paint
SWMU 7	Waste Oil Accumulation Area (outside Building 303 at Camp Garcia)	Vehicle maintenance area used to store 55-gallon drums of waste oil
SWMU 8	Waste Oil Accumulation Area (Observation Post 1, Inner Range, AFWTF)	Waste accumulation area outside generator building used to store waste oil and lubricants
SWMU 10	Sewage Treatment Lagoons (Camp Garcia)	Four unlined lagoons formerly used for the equalization and treatment of domestic wastewater
SWMU 12	Solid Waste Collection Unit Area (Observation Post 1, Inner Range, AFWTF)	A solid waste transfer area used to store domestic trash
AOC-A	Diesel Fuel Fill Pipe Area (Observation Post 1, Inner Range, AFWTF)	An area of petroleum-stained soil in the vicinity of a diesel fuel underground storage tank (UST)
AOC-F	Rock Quarry (Camp Garcia)	A rock quarry where used tires and waste paper were identified
AOC-G	Pump Station and Chlorinating Building at Sewage Lagoons (Camp Garcia)	Pump station and chlorination equipment stored in building next to former lagoons

PAOC: Potential Areas of Concern

PI Areas: Photo-Identified Area

Additional areas that are suspected of possible contamination based on their prior use (called Potential Areas of Concern or PAOCs) and Photo-Identified Areas (PI's), where ground scarring and disturbed vegetation was identified from aerial photos, will also be investigated as part of the Phase I RFI, to determine whether a release of hazardous materials has occurred.

3. Community Background

3.1 Community Concerns

It is clear from EPA's interaction with community groups and individuals living on Vieques that there is a great deal of concern about what contamination was left behind when the Navy ended its operations on the island. Based on community interviews (See Appendix A), EPA determined that most Viequenses believe there is contamination left from Navy activities on the island. All of the people interviewed expressed concerns that their air and water may not be safe and they are concerned with the amount of UXO left on the island. In some cases, residents provided EPA staff with information on areas where they either claim to have witnessed or believe there were materials buried.

UXO: Unexploded Ordnance

In addition, residents requested a greater level of communication with government agencies and additional efforts to inform them of the status of activities and of any new developments with the cleanup program. It is also clear that there is an extreme distrust of the Navy on the island and many would prefer communication through other agencies or groups.

3.2 Future Communication

Many participants offered suggestions about ways EPA could improve communication to enhance the quality and quantity of the information on investigation and cleanup activities on the island. These include:

- Increasing EPA's mailing to include all households on the island
- Continuing to use the press (i.e. television, radio and print) to relay information
- Increasing the frequency of public meetings on the island
- Receiving information directly from EPA
- Providing more direct answers to the community regarding health and risk questions
- Translating all materials into Spanish and conducting all public meetings in Spanish

- Conducting an environmental education program on the island so that the children can know more about the cleanup activities and also informing their parents and helping relay the information to more people
- Increasing outreach to churches on the island to help inform many more people about the facts related to cleanup activities

4. EPA's Community Involvement Plan

4.1 Community Involvement Goals

EPA is committed to ensuring the involvement of stakeholders in the RCRA investigation and cleanup of the AFWTF and EMA on Vieques Island. It is the Agency's goal to facilitate public involvement in a significant manner and, as a result, established the following goals for the overall community involvement program. EPA will:

- Provide the public with accurate, timely, and easy to understand information and/or access to information needed to understand the activities as they are completed;
- Provide the public with the opportunity to give their input;
- Respect and give full consideration to community input; and
- Assist the public in understanding the project decision making process.

Community involvement goals and needs must be considered and balanced with the project's technical and scientific requirements. EPA will focus its community involvement efforts on getting public input on the issues that are most important to community members and organizations.

4.2 Community Relations Work Plan

EPA's Community Involvement Plan is an independent document being developed separately, but in coordination, with the Navy's Community Relations Work Plan (CRWP) prepared by the Navy's contractor. The CRWP describes the Navy's approach for public participation activities, including preparation of a Community Relations Plan (CRP) and some interim public participation activities to be conducted while the plan is being prepared. This work plan is available for public review as part of the public comment period on the Draft Final RFI Work Plan.

The CRP was prepared during the initial stages of the RFI process. The final CRP replaces the work plan as the outline for conducting public participation activities.

The completed CRP for the RFI at AFWTF/EMA will be a self-contained supplement to the RFI Work Plans. EPA's CIP is a separate document from the CRP and it guides EPA's public participation activities. Many of these activities will be coordinated with the Navy and other stakeholders.

4.3 Community Involvement Tools and Activities

EPA has identified and developed a wide variety of community involvement tools and activities that can be used to increase public participation and involvement on the environmental cleanup activities in Vieques. The objectives of these tools and activities generally fall into one or more of four categories:

- Input – How EPA receives information from the public.
- Output – How EPA shares information with the public.
- Outreach – How EPA promotes education and awareness about the project.
- Involvement – How EPA encourages public participation in the project.

EPA will have a permanent staff member in place on Vieques by summer 2004. This person, along with community involvement support from other offices, will serve as a primary point of contact for residents, community groups, local government, and other stakeholders. In addition, he will oversee, along with EPA Region 2's Caribbean Environmental Protection Division and other Region 2 staff, activities taking place as a part of the RCRA investigation.

Input Tools and Activities

Public Information Sessions

Description: Public Information Sessions are effective, informal sessions open to the general public. They feature posters, displays, and interaction between EPA staff and the public. These sessions present detailed information in understandable terms, allow individuals to inquire about issues that most concern them, and afford each citizen a chance to speak freely to EPA personnel and contractors on a one-to-one basis. Public availability sessions do not require the use of court reporters and transcripts, although meeting summaries may be issued through newsletters and progress reports.

Goal: The goal of the sessions is to educate the public on important project issues and to enable community members to ask questions in a comfortable and informal setting. Public availability sessions also provide EPA with feedback from the community and can uncover issues not fully understood by the community.

Method: The sessions will be conducted as needed and will be held at convenient times and places. Whenever possible, public notice will be given at least two weeks before scheduled public availability sessions.

Public Forums

Description: Public forums are semi-formal public sessions that are characterized by a presentation, a question and answer session, and a less formal poster/display session. This format allows members of the public to participate in both large and small group settings. Public forums do not require the use of court reporters and transcripts, although meeting summaries may be issued through newsletters and progress reports.

Goal: Public forums are opportunities to update the community on site developments and address community questions, concerns, ideas, and comments.

Method: The sessions will be conducted as needed and will be held at convenient times and places. Whenever possible, public notice will be given at least two weeks before scheduled public forums.

Public Meetings

Description: Public meetings are structured, formal meetings open to the general public, featuring a presentation and interaction with the public. Formal public meetings may involve the use of a court reporter and the issuance of transcripts.

Goal: Public meetings are opportunities to update the community on site developments and address community questions, concerns, ideas, and comments.

Method: EPA will schedule, prepare for, and attend all announced meetings. Whenever possible, public notice will be given at least two weeks before scheduled public meetings.

Community Interviews

Description: Community interviews are designed to listen to and document concerns of community members, groups, and other stakeholders. A summary of public interviews conducted by EPA in Vieques can be found in Section 4.4 .

Goal: To obtain public input on general topics related to EPA activities.

Method: EPA staff design questions focusing on areas of concern and activities. Interviews are generally conducted in people's homes, businesses, during community events and at public information sessions. Interviews are more of a discussion than a formal interview session. Each topic is covered through open dialogue that enables the participants to speak openly and feel comfortable with both the interviewer and the questions. This results in a straightforward and honest response to the questions.

E-mail

Description: Electronic mail can be used to contact EPA representatives for information or to ask questions about this site.

Goal: This provides another method to help citizens provide input or request information.

Method: E-mail the EPA Vieques team members in New York at barry.benjamin@epa.gov , in San Juan at reyes.brenda@epa.gov , or in Vieques at rodriguez.daniel@epa.gov.

Mailing List Expansion*

Description: EPA has developed a mailing list of individuals and organizations. Utilizing several methods, EPA will solicit additional mailing addresses from community members interested in receiving information about the project through the mail.

Goal: Mailings effectively communicate project information to a wide and diverse audience and provide information to community members who do not purchase newspapers, use computers, or have access to the Internet.

Method: Methods for increasing the mailing list include direct solicitation via a community poster or postcard mailing, coordination with elected officials using constituent mailing lists, sign-up sheets at public meetings and information sessions, and by contacting community-based organizations to invite their members to sign up. Community members on the mailing list should notify EPA of any changes to their mailing address.

* The RCRA public mailing list is expressly intended for distributing project-related information. The mailing list is NOT public information and is NOT available for public viewing. While EPA may identify recipients to other agencies (e.g., Navy) for project information distribution, EPA will NOT release this list to outside parties.

Public Comment Period

Description: This is a formal opportunity for community members to review and contribute comments on various EPA documents or actions. Comment periods are legally required for, among other things, Proposed Plans, Consent Decrees, and the addition or deletion of a site to the NPL.

Goal: Comment periods provide people with the opportunity for meaningful input in the process and provide EPA with valuable information for use in making decisions.

Method: EPA will announce each comment period with public ads in local newspapers, listserv notification, and EPA fact sheets to ensure the public understands what is being presented, when comments will be accepted, how long the comment period will be open, and how to submit comments.

*EPA is not required nor does it intend to prepare responsiveness summaries for each comment submitted during the design phase of the project. However, EPA will summarize how comments were used or considered in the decision-making process.

Public Input

Description: Letters and informal discussions with EPA staff are among the ways the public and EPA can communicate about the project. EPA wants to understand the public's concerns so they can be addressed.

Goal: Verbal comments and letters allow continued opportunity for the public to give input and, consequently, allow EPA to recognize trends in issues of public concern and identify areas that require more information or clarification.

Method: Informal comments can be offered at any time, such as during availability sessions, open houses, community visits, and workshops. Written comments may be submitted by mail or via email. EPA's mailing address is:

Ben Barry
EPA
290 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Stakeholder Group Interaction

Description: EPA will coordinate with and, upon request, attend meetings of stakeholder groups.

Listserv:
subscription-based
electronic news
distribution system

Goal: Such interaction helps ensure that members of these organizations receive the information that they need and that EPA receives their input and understands their concerns. Interaction with stakeholder groups also can extend EPA's outreach by sharing EPA notices of events, site updates, and other information with their members and constituents.

Method: EPA will regularly coordinate with and, upon request, attend meetings of stakeholder groups that have identified the Vieques RCRA investigation as a focus of their organization.

Output Tools and Activities

EPA's Web Site

Description: Internet access to major technical reports, progress reports, and updates on the Vieques RCRA Investigation is available on EPA's Vieques Web site: www.epa.gov/region2/vieques/index.html. Many other sources of information are available through the EPA homepage at www.epa.gov and through links to the Web site.

Goal: EPA's Web site provides key resources for accessing both general and specific information about the site and other EPA programs. Access to EPA's Web site is available through home and public computers.

Method: EPA will post updates, progress reports, and major technical reports, generally within two business days of their release. Notice of all public meetings, forums, and availability sessions and announcements related to the project will be posted. The Web site will be updated and enhanced regularly so that users can easily search for information. EPA will provide links to important project related information posted on other sites.

Fact Sheets

Description: Fact sheets, sometimes called site or project updates, are brief documents written in plain language, often containing user-friendly graphics, to help residents understand highly technical reports, concepts, and information. All fact sheets will be available in both English and Spanish.

Goal: Fact sheets provide site-related information in an easy-to-understand format.

Method: Fact sheets will be produced throughout the investigation and cleanup process to promote understanding of the individual elements of the remedy. Fact

sheets are distributed to individuals and organizations on the mailing list, posted on the Web site, and are available at EPA offices and at public forums.

Infield Notification

Description: This type of information consists of advisories, restrictions, and explanatory signs posted to clearly mark project work areas.

Goal: Advisories, restrictions, and explanatory signs are intended to keep the public informed and maintain safety.

Method: All advisories, explanatory signs, and restrictions on land access or to project work areas will be clearly posted.

Information Repositories

Description: Information repositories are local public buildings such as libraries, universities, or government offices where site related and supporting documents are available for review. EPA is currently evaluating locations for information repositories on Vieques. All repositories will have printed copies of major documents.

Goal: Information repositories provide accessible public locations in which residents can read and copy official documents and other pertinent information about the site, EPA activities, and the RCRA process.

Method: EPA will maintain at least one repository on Vieques, in New York City, and in San Juan. These repositories will continue to be updated as documents become available.

Listserv

Description: The EPA-Vieques listserv is a free, subscription-based electronic news distribution system used by EPA to distribute updates, notifications, and progress reports via email and is the fastest way to get the latest information. The listserv cannot be used to transmit graphics and photos. All information conveyed via the listserv will be text-only. EPA will make graphics-rich documents available on the Agency's Vieques Web site in .pdf format.

Goal: The goal of using the listserv is to disseminate information as quickly and effectively as possible to large numbers of interested parties.

Method: Current recipients of mailed or faxed notifications are encouraged to switch to listserv distribution for earliest notification. However, since many citizens and elected officials do not have access to or do not use the Internet, EPA

will continue to send print copies to those who add their names to the Vieques mailing list. To register for the listserv, interested individuals can visit EPA's Vieques Web site at www.epa.gov/region2/vieques.

Maps and Visual Aids

Description: Maps and visual aids help people understand the geography of the site and the locations of activities and resources.

Goal: The objective of using visual aids is to communicate complex issues effectively.

Method: EPA will regularly use maps, photographs, and other visual aids in documents and fact sheets, at public sessions, the EPA offices, and on the Web site.

Media Distribution/Media Events

Description: EPA will provide updates and information to key local newspapers and encourage them to further distribute this information on a regular basis.

Goal: News releases and other types of information distribution to the media help EPA to reach a large audience quickly and to reinforce and distribute information further.

Method: EPA representatives will provide information and be accessible to the news media. Media briefings before public sessions may be used by EPA to summarize the purpose and main points of the event and to enhance accuracy of media coverage.

Progress Report/Newsletters

Description: Progress reports are updates that are semi-technical in nature that provide factual information about the project. They also summarize the progress of activities since the last report, describe upcoming events, and explain how to find more detailed information on described activities. Newsletters are less technical, more community-oriented publications that include articles, columns, perspectives, and photos.

Goal: Progress reports and newsletters keep the public informed and up-to-date.

Method: Progress reports and newsletters will be distributed via EPA offices, the Vieques listserv, and posted on the Vieques Web site:
www.epa.gov/region2/vieques/index.html. Progress reports will be published and

distributed at least as needed to meet community information needs. Newsletters will be published semiannually or annually.

Public Notices

Description: Public notices can be advertisements published in local newspapers or mailings that announce public comment periods for EPA decisions, public meetings, and major project milestones.

Goal: The goal of public notices is to communicate an important announcement to as many people as possible in the community.

Method: EPA will use public notices to announce public comment periods and public meetings. In certain cases, EPA may find it necessary to supplement published notices with radio announcements.

Reports/Concept Documents/Work Plans

Description: These reports detail the investigations, studies, findings, and decisions about the site and have been made available at the repositories and, in most cases, on EPA's Vieques Web site for public access.

Goal: To allow the public access to detailed information on the process and decision-making.

Method: EPA will continue to make these documents public. However, the complexities of these reports can make them difficult to understand for those without technical or scientific expertise. EPA recognizes that these reports need to be supported with other community involvement activities to give the public a clear understanding of the material presented in these documents. Therefore, EPA will prepare summaries (in both English and Spanish when possible) to accompany the release of reports to the public. All reports will be available at EPA offices and site repositories.

Outreach Tools and Activities

Community Events

Description: EPA will attend community events such as fairs and festivals to distribute information and provide answers to questions.

Goal: Community events provide EPA with the opportunity to build and maintain good relationships with residents. Community events also allow EPA to understand and appreciate the daily lives of community members and the events and activities that are important and enjoyed by them.

Method: EPA will supply and staff an information booth at appropriate events.

Project Site Visits/Tours

Description: Small groups will be given guided tours to view site activities when such tours are feasible, appropriate, and safe.

Goal: Site visits give the public a better understanding of the project work.

Method: EPA staff will lead tours of the sites and explain what is occurring. Field demonstrations will be based on interest and safety considerations.

School/Education Outreach Activities

Description: EPA will provide project information to interested schools and will assist them in developing educational projects related to the Vieques RCRA investigation.

Goal: Educational activities help expand awareness and understanding of the project and strengthen ties to the community.

Method: Educators and students can visit or call EPA for information, arrange a field trip, request a visit to their school from an EPA representative, or visit any of these pages on the EPA Web site: www.epa.gov/region2/vieques/index.html, www.epa.gov/kids, www.epa.gov/students, or www.epa.gov/teachers.

Workshops/Seminars

Description: Workshops and seminars are classroom-style sessions used to provide more detailed technical information for interested citizens. Workshops can be used to explore project-specific topics such as how dredging operations occur or more general scientific topics such as how statistics are used in the project.

Goal: Workshops can be used to educate small groups of citizens on the chosen topics and address issues identified in the Community Involvement Plan.

Method: If there is sufficient interest, EPA will conduct targeted workshops to educate the public on the basics of the RCRA investigation and related project topics.

Involvement Tools and Activities

Coordination with Local Government and Agencies

Description: EPA will coordinate with local governments and agencies to keep them informed and to get feedback on their concerns. EPA will communicate with these representatives and agencies through all the phases of the project.

Goal: EPA's goal is to ensure that local government officials and agencies are informed of project activities that may occur in their jurisdiction and to help minimize the impacts of project activities.

Method: EPA will continue to foster relationships with local representatives and agencies through meeting and dialogue.

DRAFT

List of Acronyms

EPA – United States Environmental Protection Agency

CIP – Community Involvement Plan

EMA – Eastern Maneuver Area

TRC – Technical Review Committee

NASD – Naval Ammunition and Support Detachment

DOI – U.S. Department of Interior

FWS – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

RCRA – Resource Conservation and Recovery Act

RFI – RCRA Facility Investigation

SWMU – Solid Waste Management Units

AOC – Area of Concern

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

PREQB – Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board

PAOC – Potential Areas of Concern

PIA – Photo-Identified Area

UXO – Unexploded Ordnance

RAB – Restoration Advisory Board

ATSDR – Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

Appendix A

Community Interviews *

* The opinions outlined are for information and documentation purposes only. The opinions expressed are those of the individuals interviewed and not EPA or other residents of Vieques.

The community interviews conducted in Vieques during the week of October 5, 2003 were designed to listen and document the concerns and needs of the people of Vieques following the withdrawal of the Navy. EPA conducted 40 interviews with participants that included residents, local officials and community leaders. This report details the responses given to the 14 questions that covered:

- Knowledge of the environmental issues on Vieques
- Access to information from federal or local sources
- Knowledge of roles and responsibilities of federal agencies
- Health impacts of Navy activities
- Desire to know more about the investigation and cleanup activities and/or join advisory groups
- Future involvement with federal agencies

Summary of Responses

Interviews were conducted in people's homes, businesses, and during a health fair and a public availability session. The following summarizes their responses.

1. Knowledge of the environmental problems in Vieques

- Participants believe the Navy training and related activities over the decades caused all of the present contamination on the island.
- Community members feel strongly that the water they drink and the air they breathe daily have some level of contamination that has not been disclosed to them.
- Participants have very little knowledge of the current environmental activities being done by the Navy. They feel these involved agencies will take many years to clean up their lands.
- They believe that the Navy has not disclosed many of the areas that they used for bombing, or the contamination that may be present.
- Residents expressed concerns about hidden landfills and unknown chemicals used in the bombing exercises.
- Some believe the Navy experimented with radioactive materials and chemical agents such as Agent Orange in many of the properties on both the eastern and western portions of the island.
- Some participants who knew people that worked with the Navy in the past purported to have knowledge of undisclosed contaminated areas and offered to show EPA the locations of these areas.
- All the participants expressed strong concern about Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and possible land mines left on the island. Although these

materials may be in restricted areas, they are not totally inaccessible to children and others.

- Many participants expressed concern that the present contamination has also affected the wildlife of the island and will continue to cause harm for years to come.

2. Access to information from federal or local sources

- All of the participants interviewed stated that more information on the current and future environmental activities needs to be released to the people of Vieques.
- Participants stated that the majority of their information is obtained through the press, both television and newspaper. However, some have received information from EPA, FWS, and PREQB, through fact sheets and other materials.
- Some information has also been obtained through the local government community meetings, newsletters, and through word of mouth.
- Some have found the public meetings to be a useful way to obtain information. They would, however, like to see more frequent meetings and have more opportunity to ask questions directly to EPA.
- Some information is also obtained through the TRC and community groups on the island.
- The negative perception of the federal government on the island has also resulted in many of the people in Vieques relying more on hearsay and rumors, than factual information released by the Navy, EPA or any other government agency.

3. Knowledge of roles and responsibilities of federal agencies

- Many participants were confused about the different roles the EPA and the Navy have on the east and west sides of the island.
- Many of the participants want the EPA to lead the investigation and cleanup activities on the island with the Navy providing the resources (i.e. money) for the activities.

- Many of the participants were confused about the role of the Fish and Wildlife Service in Vieques.

4. Health impacts from the Navy bombings

- Most participants blame the Navy's activities on the island for the alleged increase in cancer rates and other illnesses.
- Many participants believe that air pollution from the bombing, resulted in an increase in respiratory illnesses such as lung cancer, emphysema, and asthma. Participants cited an increase in asthma among children.
- Some participants, including the teachers we interviewed, spoke about recent learning deficiencies in children which they said could have been caused by lead contamination related to the Navy exercises.
- Interviewees reported an increase in unexplained and uncommon rashes and other skin problems.
- Some of the participants said that many people suffer from loss of hearing, hearing problems, and constant headaches.
- Many of the participants insisted that runoff from known and unknown hazardous dump sites throughout the island continue to contaminate the fish that many people on the island depend on for subsistence.
- Most of the participants interviewed want some form of medical examinations to determine if their illnesses may have been caused by exposure to hazardous chemicals.
- Health problems have also had a tremendous impact on the economy because of the frequent medical attention and high cost of medical and prescription drugs, according to many of the participants.
- Participants expressed that living with the Navy bombings over the years and dealing with the civil unrest and contamination have left many residents suffering from depression and anxiety disorders.

5. Desire to know more about the investigation cleanup activities and/or join advisory groups

- Everyone that we interviewed wanted some level of involvement in the investigation and cleanup process. They either would like to be kept informed through the local media and receive updates through mailings, or wanted to join existing or new community groups.
- Many residents are concerned that the TRC is made up of technical advisors and environmentalists that are not from Vieques and do not fully represent the needs and concerns of the people of Vieques.
- Residents would like the Navy and EPA to form a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB).
- There was a general consensus among the participants that any community or technical group should be represented mostly from those on the island

(business, fishing, health, government, community leaders, and teachers). They want these interest groups, along with any technical advisors, to be Puerto Rican.

- Many participants favored the creation of an additional group with a diverse membership, to work on the issues related to the eastern portion of the island.

6. Future involvement and interaction with federal agencies

- The majority of the people do not want any involvement with the Navy.
- Many of the participants expressed a strong desire to receive more information on the investigation and cleanup activities on the island.
- Residents recommended that EPA increase mailing to include all of the 9,000 people on the island, to continue to use the press (i.e. television, radio and print) to relay information and to increase the frequency of public meetings on the island.
- They prefer to receive information from EPA, community groups in the area, press and public meetings.
- Some of the participants were critical of ATSDR for not answering their questions about health and risk.
- Everyone interviewed found it necessary to have all materials translated into Spanish and to have all public meetings conducted in Spanish.
- Many expressed the need to educate and involve the schools on the island so that the children can know more about the cleanup activities and also inform their parents and help disseminate the information to more people.
- Many also expressed the need to work with the churches on the island to help inform many more people on the facts about cleanup activities.
- Some participants stated their desire to be present during field activities during the investigation and cleanup actions. According to responders, this will provide another layer of oversight to the Navy's actions.

7. Other concerns and issues

- Participants would like to have access to the restricted areas in the future.
- Participants also want local people trained to conduct cleanup activities.
- Write plain Spanish fact sheets, updates and letters to the community.