

Dan Waddill
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Dear Mr. Waddill:

I would like to follow up on the information requested by the community at the RAB meeting on Wednesday, February 25, 2015 in the RAB meeting in Vieques. I also have several questions in response to some of the things you stated in the meeting. I have consulted with some leaders in the community who are also eager to hear the response to these questions.

When I visit the web site address published in your Bulletin dated Feb 2015, the web site says it is undergoing maintenance (<http://www.navfac.navy.mil/vieques>). Can you make the following information available on the Navy's web site? If not now, when? I am interested in obtaining all documents in both Spanish and English. If they are not on the web site, please email me whatever you can.

- The new community involvement plan and the date when the community will be asked to comment on that.
Navy Response: The Navy is preparing the Community Involvement Plan in cooperation with our regulatory partners, the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (EQB), the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER), the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The Navy is currently revising the Community Involvement Plan to address comments from these agencies. We expect to reach consensus within the next few weeks. Therefore, we are targeting the middle of April as the time when the community will be asked to comment on the plan.
- All the PowerPoint presentations made at the RAB meeting on Feb 25, 2015
Navy Response: All of the Navy PowerPoint presentations (English and Spanish versions) from the February 25 RAB meeting have been emailed to you as requested. In addition, the presentations will be uploaded to the public website with the meeting minutes as soon as the minutes are prepared and reviewed by the agencies involved in the RAB meeting.
- The map titled, "Actividades Planificadas para el 2015"
Navy Response: The map has been emailed to you as requested. In addition, the map will be posted to the public website with the meeting minutes as soon as the minutes are prepared and reviewed by the agencies involved in the RAB meeting.

- The brochure entitled, "Status of Vieques Cleanup Program Sites under CERCLA"
Navy Response: The brochure has been emailed to you as requested. In addition, the map will be posted to the public website with the meeting minutes as soon as the minutes are prepared and reviewed by the agencies involved in the RAB meeting.
- Copy of the findings of the archeological studies done on Cayo La Chiva
Navy Response: Please contact the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which is in charge of archaeological information.

Access to Information

You acknowledged that the Navy is not keeping their site updated with information to which the community should have access. To whom can I write to protest this lack of public access and request that it be updated contemporaneously with clean-up activities? It was also acknowledged in the meeting that there is NO public repository of the cleanup documents in Vieques. I understood that federal legislation was passed in 2013 asking the Navy to do just that. What is being done to create one, and when can we expect to have a site accessible to the public with all the relevant documents?

Navy Response: The Navy does keep the public website updated with all information to which the community should have access. In addition, as stated at the meeting by the local EPA representative (Mr. Daniel Rodriguez), the EPA office on Vieques maintains documents related to cleanup activities, and these are available to the public during normal working hours. In the past, the Navy had maintained the administrative record in a physical repository located in the building of Asuntos de la Juventud, Benítez Guzmán Street in Vieques. However, during the update of the Community Involvement Plan, it was determined from the interviews with the public that the physical repository location was not being used. The interviewees indicated that the public website would be an improved method of making the administrative record available for the public. The website was temporarily down for maintenance when you checked it in February, but Navy Information Technology specialists continuously work to minimize downtime associated with maintenance.

Was there a representative of the Municipality of Vieques at February 25 the meeting, and if so, who?

Navy Response: Yes, the Vieques Mayor and the Mayor's legal assistant were in attendance at the February 25 meeting.

RAB

In regards to the RAB, who are the current members of the RAB and who maintains that list?

Navy Response: We have contacted the RAB members by email or regular mail, asking them to provide you their names if they are comfortable doing so.

How are community members solicited to become involved as community representatives?

Navy Response: The Navy regularly solicits community members to join the RAB as community representatives. The requests are made at RAB meetings, other public meetings, in newsletters, flyers, mass mailings to all postal addresses on Vieques, and the personal

interviews conducted during the update of the Community Involvement Plan. During the past year, RAB membership has increased, as two community members have joined the RAB.

What is the residence of each member?

Navy Response: We have contacted the RAB members by email or regular mail, asking them to provide you their residences if they are comfortable doing so.

What was the basis for your statement made at the February 25 meeting that the Vieques RAB was one of the most successful RABs in existence? What criteria are used to determine the success of a RAB?

Navy Response: The meeting on February 25 was the 44th RAB meeting during the past 11 years. One of the RAB members let me know that she has been to 41 or 42 of those meetings. Other RAB members have attended just about as many meetings. Thus, these Vieques community RAB members have demonstrated exceptional long term commitment. During the past year, 2 new members have joined the RAB, showing continued community interest in RAB participation. Over the years, RAB community members have participated in numerous site visits, outreach events, and training sessions. This level of commitment and participation is exceptional and extremely valuable to the cleanup efforts. The community RAB members provide insightful comments on cleanup documents; they ask useful questions during meetings; and they give candid criticism when they disagree with the direction that has been proposed by consensus agreement among Navy, EQB, DNER, EPA, and FWS. It is clear that RAB members have spent countless hours reviewing and commenting on documents. Navy, EQB, DNER, EPA, and FWS pay careful attention to RAB comments, and input from the RAB has led to changes in the direction of the cleanup at SWMU 4 in West Vieques and the Eastern Conservation Area (ECA) in East Vieques. During my Navy career, I have worked with many RABs across the county, and in my experience, the Vieques RAB community members are second to none in providing thoughtful, long term, and productive input. Overall, their service has been invaluable.

Munitions

What data do you have to support your statement at the meeting that "There are tens of thousands of munitions items that we have recovered already. And we've gotten most of them by now. There are going to be some that we don't find. The goal is that we get enough of it and get enough controls in place. And a lot of it is just making people aware that if you see a funny looking item, don't pick it up"?

Navy Response: As part of our cleanup efforts, the Navy uses an electronic database which allows us to track the number of munitions items that have been removed. The records show that over 90,000 munitions items have been identified and removed from the former Navy areas on Vieques. More than 40,000 munitions items have been destroyed through demolition. We know these numbers represent most of the munitions on the land portions of Vieques because the clearance work has already been carried out on the most heavily impacted areas. In the munitions cleanup industry, it is standard practice to assume that not all munitions items can be found, regardless of the level of cleanup. Therefore, it is also standard practice to monitor former munitions sites, post warning signs, and teach people what to do if they

encounter a munition. All of these activities are standard practice at former munitions sites across the United States. A standard safety message for the public is the 3 R's, which stands for Recognize, Retreat, and Report. In general, it is easy to recognize new munitions, but over time, munitions may become corroded, start to fall apart, and become less recognizable. Thus, we tell people not to pick up anything that looks suspicious, out of place, funny, unnatural, etc. This idea is extremely important, and it is critical that people understand it.

Additionally,

1. When you say you have gotten most of the munitions, what percentage do you mean? In order to say that you would have to have an estimate of how many there are in total, what is that estimate? In what areas are you referring to when you make that statement? Only the land, or underwater as well? You said about 3000 acres have been part of the removal actions so far.

Navy Response: We do not have enough information to calculate a percentage. However, we know we have removed most of the munitions because the clearance work has already been performed on the most heavily impacted areas. This statement refers to the land areas. As stated at the RAB meeting, the underwater work is just beginning.

2. To what depth in the ground are you referring when you say you have gotten most of the munitions? How far under the surface are you conducting the clean-up? Is it just to extract or remove munitions, or are you treating the toxic soil as well? If so, at what depth? (I assume that you are not including the munitions below the level covered in your removal actions - in which case, you may not have gotten most of the munitions deeper down in the ground.)

Navy Response: Munitions are cleared to a depth of 4 feet on beaches and a depth of 2 feet on roads. Also, in areas that will be used for parking, construction projects, trails, or other activities, munitions are cleared to a depth that will support the land use. As part of the cleanup process, soil, sediment, surface water, and groundwater are all being investigated for the potential presence of contaminants. The Navy, EQB, DNER, EPA, and FWS will work together to complete the investigation and come up with treatment approaches. During RAB meetings and other public meetings, the RAB and the general public will be informed and have the chance to comment on this process

3. When you made the statement mentioned above, you did not refer to the toxic waste left by the munitions that continue to leach from those munitions, so I wonder why teaching residents and visitors not to pick-up munitions is so key when you would also have to teach them how not to get exposed to toxins that are in the environment. It sounds like you are placing the burden of avoidance of visible (munitions) and invisible (toxins) on the user of the land and sea when genuine cleaning would mean removal and elimination of exposure to these dangers. What efforts is the Navy taking to eliminate air-borne toxins that permeate the air and surrounding waters, particularly as a result of the on-going open-air detonations and burning of vegetation?

Navy Response: When munitions explode, the explosive chemicals are converted to gases that normally exist in the atmosphere. These gases include water vapor, carbon dioxide, nitrogen gas, and nitrogen oxides. Thus the explosive compounds are not left behind in the environment because they are consumed in the explosion. During many years of clearance efforts, the Navy has performed extensive air monitoring and completed air modeling which demonstrate that the air is not an environmental or a health concern. Members of the public should never pick up munitions or any item that they suspect may be a munition. This is a critically important safety message.

4. SWMU4 - I am left puzzled as to why people will soon be allowed to enter into a new Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) recreation area adjacent to SWMU4 when the entire area will not have been cleaned. The new recreation area will include a picnic area, observation tower, and crabbing. It sounds to me like the Navy is still assuming that the public can be kept out of contaminated areas by using signs and fences instead of conducting adequate and responsible clean-up to appropriately decontaminate all areas previously utilized by the Navy for military practices. You also mentioned that FWS will be informing the community of the guidelines/permits for using the new recreation area. I suggest that the cleanup of the entire area be given more a priority so as not to put the public at risk.

Navy Response: The approach to SWMU 4 has been developed by consensus among the Navy, EQB, DNER, EPA, and FWS. Public input has also been considered, and the public will continue to have opportunities to comment. The approach does not include fences, and signs will be used only to mark the boundary of the area, rather than keep people out. The Navy, EQB, and EPA employ leading experts in munitions cleanup and safety, and these experts have been thoroughly involved in designing the approach to SWMU 4 to ensure that it is appropriate to allow public access. Since SWMU 4 is part of the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge, FWS manages the area and will set the guidelines for its use.

I see in your chart that the SWMU4 is in the "Feasibility Study" stage – what does that mean in terms of status of clean-up activities, standard for removal of all toxic waste and chemicals, and public use?

Navy Response: The cleanup work on Vieques is being performed under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), often called "Superfund." The Feasibility Study is required by CERCLA, and it serves to identify and describe potential alternatives for cleanup. Following the Feasibility Study, a final cleanup approach will be selected by consensus among the Navy, EQB, DNER, EPA, and FWS. Additional public input on the proposed approach will also be considered.

5. Regarding the Underwater Munitions Removal Action adjacent to Cayo La Chiva: what type of and quantity of munitions were found there? Will the community be consulted before any further action is taken? You said this is a priority - when do you expect to take action, and what type of action is being contemplated?

Navy Response: There were nine munitions items found near Cayo La Chiva. Five items

were identified as 5-inch rockets. Four items could not be identified during the investigation, but they will be identified during the removal action. In accordance with the CERCLA process, a public meeting will be held to allow for public input on the proposed cleanup approach. Currently, the RAB is reviewing the report on the Remedial Investigation / Feasibility Study (RI/FS). It is expected that cleanup actions will take place in early 2016, once the approach for addressing each item, including protection of any endangered marine life, has been agreed upon by the Navy and regulatory agencies. Cleanup alternatives that have been described in the Feasibility Study include removal to land followed by detonation, detonation in place underwater, and encapsulation underwater.

6. Regarding your statement in the meeting, please inform us as to what areas and the size of those areas in the East end you are expecting to need to burn vegetation?
Navy Response: The statement referred to the 75 acre submunitions area, located within the former Live Impact Area (LIA).

Funding

You stated more than once in the meeting that the funds for the Vieques cleanup were sufficient and that the Navy continues to give the Vieques cleanup priority. Could you please send a chart showing the yearly funding of the cleanup since its inception and what you project for the next 10 years. For each year, I would like to see what amount was paid to the contractor CH2m Hill.
Navy Response: Since 2005, the Navy has spent an average of approximately \$20 million per year on the cleanup of Vieques. Due to the federal budget situation during the past few years, Vieques cleanup funding has been somewhat less than \$20 million per year. Nevertheless, Vieques remains the highest priority in the Navy Munitions Response Program, and the Navy spends significantly more money on the Vieques cleanup than any other site.

Thanking you in advance for your attention,

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