

DUP

5/16/01-02085

Technical Review Committee
for Environmental Restoration Activities
at the Former U.S. Naval Ammunition Support Detachment (NASD), Vieques Island, PR

Minutes of Meeting No. 1 — Wednesday, May 16, 2001 — The Crow's Nest Inn, Vieques, PR

I. Welcome/Introductions

After the people attending the meeting introduced themselves, Christopher Penny (the Navy's Remedial Project Manager from Norfolk, VA), outlined the purpose and process of a Technical Review Committee and explained the agenda for the evening's meeting. He encouraged the community members to ask questions at any time during the meeting and to consider how the Technical Review Committee (TRC) should proceed from here.

In addition to the persons invited as TRC members, a number of local residents were present at the meeting as guests. The attendance list is enclosed as Attachment 1.

Two informational presentations were made to the group. The first presentation outlined public participation in the environmental restoration process and how this TRC is proposed to function. The second presentation described the Environmental Restoration program and provided an update on the investigation of 17 potentially-contaminated sites on the former U.S. Naval Ammunition Support Detachment (NASD) property.

Copies of the April 2000 Community Fact Sheet were distributed. Copies are available in the public information repositories and on the public information website (see Attachment 2).

II. Summary of Presentations

Opportunities for Public Participation (Ginny Farris, CH2M HILL)

The public should be involved in environmental restoration decision-making, because they are potentially affected and they can help identify issues and values that should be considered in making cleanup decisions. Public participation opportunities include public notices in newspapers (to announce comment periods, etc.), fact sheets to provide more detail, public meetings, and participation in a TRC or Restoration Advisory Board (RAB).

TRCs and RABs meet regularly to review plans and reports and provide advice on cleanup issues. The proposed TRC for the cleanup of the Navy's former NASD property should represent stakeholder groups, including local residents; the new owners of the property (Municipality of Vieques, US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), and Puerto Rico Conservation Trust (PRCT) – however, none of the sites are on the PRCT's land); the government agencies with a role in the cleanup (US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (EQB)); and the Navy as the former land owner.

This TRC is proposed to have about 8 community members. A typical TRC only has one or two community members. The Navy has nominated the first 4 community members and asked them to nominate about 4 more community members. This could be from a list of persons known to be interested or other people who are interested in cleanup issues at NASD.

The first 4 **community members** to be nominated are:

- Arcinio Corcino Meléndez
- Sharon Grasso (not able to attend this meeting)
- Stacie Notine
- Luis Dávila Soto

Members representing **government agencies** will be nominated by the agency. So far, these are:

- **Municipality:** not yet appointed (by the Mayor)
- **EQB:** not yet appointed (by the CERCLA branch head)
- **EPA Region 2:** Robert Wing
- **FWS:** Felix López (Boqueron Field Office) and Fernando Núñez Garcia (Manager of the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge)
- **Navy:** Christopher T. Penny (Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Atlantic Division (LANTRDIV)) and Madeline Rivera Ruiz (Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Environmental Engineering Division)(not able to attend this meeting)

TRC Navy members are expected to provide documents, information, and training to TRC members, to ensure that community concerns are considered, and to refer non-restoration issues to other appropriate Navy officials (so the TRC can stay focussed on cleanup issues). **TRC regulatory agency members** are expected to act as information resources for the community and to ensure that Federal and Commonwealth environmental standards and regulations are addressed. **TRC community members** are expected to participate openly and constructively, to provide advice and feedback about community concerns, to identify projects for Technical Assistance for Public Participation (TAPP) funding, and to help get information out to the rest of the community.

The main differences between a RAB and a TRC are that a RAB adds more community members, through a formal process of application (and selection by a community-based selection panel), and that all RAB meetings must be advertised and open to the general public. The process of setting up a RAB can take time (as much as 6 months).

This TRC could transition to a RAB, if and when conditions are suitable for collaborative discussions about cleanup issues and when TRC members agree that the time is right for (productive) open public meetings. In the meantime, TRC members are encouraged to invite interested non-members to visit and ask questions, like this first meeting, but they should communicate with other members about that before the meeting, so we know roughly how many visitors to expect.

Environmental Restoration Program (Marty Clasen, CH2M HILL)

The second presentation described the Environmental Restoration program and the history and current status of the 17 potentially-contaminated sites that have been identified for investigation under the Environmental Restoration program (also called Installation Restoration, or IR). Ten of these sites were identified by earlier investigations and 7 more were recently identified by an Environmental Baseline Survey, which was done last year, before the property transfer.

The Environmental Restoration program provides funding and guidance for investigating and cleaning up hazardous waste sites at military installations. The process is similar to EPA's

"Superfund" (CERCLA) process. However, NASD is not one of the "Superfund" sites listed by EPA, which are considered to be the worst sites in the nation. The EPA representative said that the western side of Vieques is "not nasty" (i.e., not as contaminated) compared to other sites they have dealt with in the past, and doesn't qualify for listing by EPA on the National Priorities List (NPL or "Superfund").

Funding is split among all installations in a region and is prioritized on a "worst-first" basis, by weighing the relative risks of all sites to the environment and to human health and safety. Funding has already been set aside for the NASD cleanup: \$13 million through fiscal year 2005, when the investigation and remediation should be finished. In the event that remediation extends past 2005, or unexpected conditions are found that require more work, then additional funding will be provided by the Navy.

Overview of Sites

About 50 acres of the land that was transferred to the Municipality of Vieques are known or suspected to contain hazardous substances and about 400 acres of the land transferred to FWS may contain hazardous substances or some ordnance/explosives. The Navy is still responsible for these sites and will keep restrictive easements on them until investigation and any necessary cleanup is done. The 17 sites are called either "Solid Waste Management Units" (SWMUs), which are places where hazardous materials or solid waste were stored or disposed of or spilled, and Areas of Concern (AOC), which are places that are suspected to be possibly contaminated because of past activities. A map showing these sites was provided (see Attachment 3) and aerial or other photographs were displayed.

Ten of the sites are near the **Former Public Works Area**, off Highway 200. From the preliminary investigation, it looks like most of these sites may be eligible for a "no further action" report and closeout, but several of them (like the former underground storage tank) will need further investigation.

The **Open Burn/Open Detonation Range (OB/OD, or SWMU 4)** is on FWS land, where out-of-date munitions were burned in the past, will require more sampling and also an ordnance/explosives survey. These are separate investigations, but will have to be coordinated. As burn pits and/or ordnance items are found, the soil will be sampled around those areas for contaminants. As the map shows, a circular area of approximately 400 acres has been fenced off, to make sure that the public stays far away from any possible hazards until the study and removal of hazardous items are completed. This large fenced area was based on estimates of the possible "kick-out" of burned explosives; however, the old burn pits are believed to be located within a 40-acre area located in the center of this area.

The **Drone Fuel Disposal Site (SWMU 5)** is a ditch outside an old storage building, where fuels from drones (remote-control aircraft that were used for target practice) were dumped on the ground in the 1960s. This fuel evaporates quickly and samples didn't find chemicals related to this fuel in the soil; the compound found in one sample probably came from the asphalt road next to the ditch.

The **Mangrove Disposal Site (SWMU 6)**, near Kiani Lagoon, was used to dump household trash and industrial waste. Most of the material dumped here was later removed and taken to the municipal landfill, but a fraction of it still remains at the site. This site was also found to contain a few ordnance items (concrete-filled "dummy" bombs).

The **Quebrada Disposal Site (SWMU 7)** also a former trash dump, where some of the material still remains.

AOC E is the site of a former underground storage tank (UST) where some petroleum (waste oil) apparently leaked into the ground.

At the former **Asphalt Plant (AOC I)**, there is an area where some spilled asphalt has been found. That would not be considered a hazardous waste site in many places, but the total petroleum hydrocarbons from the asphalt that were found in the soil samples are above EQB screening criteria, so we may need to investigate further.

The **Former Operations Area Site (AOC J)** was another landfill in the 1960s. Most of the waste was removed and taken to the municipal landfill, but some is still there. At a site visit in August 2000, some scrap metal, shell casings, and an ammunition box were observed in one small area, so an ordnance/explosives survey is planned along with the sampling.

The **Former Operations and Staging Area (AOC R)** is now just a concrete slab, but in the 1960s it was the main operations area that consisted of Public Works buildings, a parking area and a vehicle maintenance shop, where materials like fuel, oil, etc. may have been stored.

The **Former Power Plant (AOC H)** was operated from 1941-1943 and formerly had diesel fuel generators and fuel tanks. This site needs to be further investigated for traces of fuel that might have spilled or leaked from the tanks. The inside of the building was wipe-sampled during the Environmental Baseline Survey, to look for PCBs (commonly used in electrical transformers at that time), but none were found.

Current Status and Future Actions

The Phase I Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation (PA/SI) of 10 sites is completed and 4 of those sites were recommended for more detailed investigations (SWMUs 4, 6, 7 and AOC E). Field work for the Phase II PA/SI of 7 AOCs has been done and the data is now being evaluated to find out whether or not any of these areas need more detailed study.

We are also working on a background study, using samples taken at uncontaminated locations, to find out what is the normal range of naturally-occurring metals in the soil. The results of this study will be used to determine if additional studies are needed at the remaining 6 sites of the Phase I PA/SI (that were not recommended for further study) and at the 7 Phase II PA/SI sites.

In April, the Navy completed an ordnance/explosives (OE) survey at Green Beach. The Navy organization that is responsible for explosives safety (NOSSA) required this before the land transfer, because the Marines had used the area for training exercises. The Navy researched archival records (in the National Archives, Navy Historical Center, Marine Historical Center, Camp Lejeune, and NSRR) and interviewed people who had trained there; very little documentation of training on the western side of the island was found. From what we did find, the Marines were not allowed to use "live" bullets or shells because of the munitions stored in magazines on the western side; only blanks and photoflash cartridges (used to imitate real explosions) were used. The field investigation included a visual sweep and magnetometer survey of the entire beach area and the roads along Green Beach, along with a statistical sampling of the vegetated area. The only items found were several blank bullet cartridges, a bayonet, and many aluminum cans.

At the sites recommended for further action by the PA/SI, a more detailed and focused study called a Remedial Investigation (RI) will include collecting and analyzing more samples, to determine the nature and extent of contaminant releases; formal risk assessment of long-term risks to human health and ecology, based on land use plan (residential or non-residential) for each site. A Feasibility Study (FS) will examine alternatives for remedial action, comparing different technologies and their costs.

Ordnance/explosives (O/E) surveys are planned at SWMU 4, SWMU 6, and AOC J. This will consist of a geophysical survey, determining the extent of O/E and buried O/E, removing all O/E found on the surface and buried OE to a 1-foot depth, and disposing of it, which could mean exploding it in place or taking it away. The required depth of removal depends on future land use; all 3 sites of these sites are on DOI land that will not be developed, so there will not be deep excavation to construct buildings.

The anticipated schedule right now is: Phase II PA/SI in Summer 2001; RI/FS Work Plan and OE Workplan in Fall 2001/Winter 2002; RI/FS Field Investigation in Spring 2002; Draft RI/FS report in Fall 2002/Winter 2003.

III. Public Questions and Comments

(Note: Questions, comments and discussions took place throughout the presentations and afterward. For ease of reference, they are all summarized together here.)

Q: TRC members asked if the \$13 million for investigation and cleanup of NASD comes out of the \$40 million in economic development funding and what happens if more funding is needed?

A: The \$13 million is from separate source of funds called "Environmental Restoration Navy." That total was based on a good-faith estimate that was done early in the process, so some adjustments or possibly additional funding (and time) might be needed, if the investigation finds that conditions at some sites are more complex than we now expect.

Q: What is the acreage that is known to be contaminated on the OB/OD site and why hasn't the OB/OD buffer zone been extended into the ocean side (complete the circle)?

A: The exact acreage isn't known yet, but the OB/OD site itself is only a small part of the fenced-off area, which was drawn to be very conservative. To draw the buffer zone, the Navy estimated how far pieces might have been "kicked out" when burned/exploded and then went out another 1,000 feet. A couple of old burn pits have been located, but the vegetation that's grown over the site is very thick, making it a hard site to investigate. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians did a scuba survey along the ocean side, and we interviewed fishermen who had been diving and catching lobsters there for years; no evidence of O/E on the ocean side was found.

Q: A TRC member asked, how do you determine the location of the burn pits?

A: CH2MHill stated that several methods are used to locate the pits, including: review of historical documents, a field site visit to identify disturbed areas of the soil, a geophysical survey to identify buried metallic materials, and test drilling to determine if the soils are contaminated.

A TRC member commented that Navy documents (the 2000 Environmental Baseline Survey and the earlier Initial Assessment Survey) contradict each other in terms of the date the open demolition area was closed. One document says it was 1979 while the other says it was in 1980.

Q: There was discussion of the degree of priority that the Navy and the EPA has given to cleaning the OB/OD site where ordnance was exploded.

A: Christopher Penny explained that SWMU 4 is probably the highest priority site right now, from a risk viewpoint, but that the planning and review process for ordnance/explosives work goes through several extra Defense and Navy agencies and is very lengthy. Meanwhile, the Navy should be able to start work on some of the other simpler sites, like the 10 sites near the Former Support Base area, in hopes of being able to turn at least some of those site easements back over to the Municipality of Vieques this year. Once the work plans for SWMU 4 are approved, that site will be a high priority for the Navy.

Q: There was discussion about how deep under the surface of the ground would O/E be removed. What if FWS needs to dig deeper to plant trees?

A: Since SWMU 4 is part of the wildlife refuge, and will not be developed, regulations only require clearance down to one foot under the surface. The Navy will coordinate with FWS about O/E clearance issues on their land.

Q: A TRC community member, who is a long-time resident, said that he remembers seeing trash that had been dumped in Kiani Lagoon (the Mangrove Disposal Site) about 20 years ago, in pits that were about 20 feet deep. He said that he saw boxes with what appeared to be flares or items that could have been explosives.

A: Navy/CH2M HILL personnel said that some contaminants were detected near the surface of this site, but this information will be taken into account for future investigations at the site. This is one of the sites that will require investigation for O/E and more detailed environmental study (RI/FS).

Q: What is the composition of the drone fuel that was spilled in 1968? Navy documents say that was classified.

A: The fuels contained inhibited red fuming nitric acid (IRFNA) and mixed amine fuels (MAF). That may have been classified information at one time, but it's not now.

There was a discussion about the possible risk to people who visit the Kiani Lagoon area to catch land crabs and other sea creatures. One TRC member said that it wasn't until six months ago that the Navy placed "Environmental Restoration Site" signs. FWS personnel added that "no crabbing allowed" signs were recently placed in the area, because taking animals is not allowed at all anymore, now that it's a wildlife refuge. (On Municipality-owned land, crabs can be legally taken during the proper seasons.)

Several TRC members felt that this area should have more explicit signs indicating that crabs from the area should not be consumed due to possible contamination. Even though crabbing is not allowed in the refuge, human nature will lead some people to ignore that, but a possible health hazard warning might keep them away.

There was a discussion about the wording these signs should have. Any such signs must accurately reflect the condition of these animals, to avoid creating unnecessary concern on the part of local residents. Right now, there is not enough data to say whether or not eating crabs actually could be a long-term health hazard. It was agreed that Navy and FWS will consult on the issue (because FWS needs to agree to any signs on their property) and that at the next meeting, proposed wording for new signs will be presented.

Q: Concerns were raised about the level of remediation that would be done on the property that were given to the Municipality, because risk-based cleanup levels are based on projected land use. The existing land use plan was passed by the previous administration. There is a very strong possibility the current administration would want to use this land for residential purposes rather than light industrial purposes, according to one visitor who works for the Municipal government. The current administration has plans for these lands that does not match the designated usage proposed by the previous government. What happens when an remedial action plan is approved and then the local governing authority changes its land use plan?

A: Christopher Penny explained that either the new owner assumes responsibility for the cost of additional restoration, beyond what is required for the intended land use that was agreed upon between the previous administrations, or the local authority can petition the Federal government for more stringent cleanup. Also, the investigations that are being done may indicate that some of these areas actually are (or will be) suitable for residential use.

Q: One visitor asked about the quarry next to AOC I – are traces of dynamite used to excavate the rock considered hazardous substances and should that being sampled for?

A: The Navy and CH2M HILL will look into that issue further, but the quarry is not considered an environmental restoration site now. The Municipality might continue to use it as an active quarry (it's a good source of rock for road beds), in which case dynamite could be used again.

Q: A TRC member asked if the Former Power Plant building is still structurally sound.

A: This is not something that's part of an Environmental Restoration study (it's a structural engineering issue), so that question can't be answered.

IV. Plans for the Next TRC Meeting

Christopher Penny suggested, and the group agreed, that the next meeting should occur in late July or early August, after the draft Phase II PA/SI report and the background study are finished.

Before that time, the 4 initial TRC members should get together and decide on the other community members they want to nominate. There should be about 4 more members from the community added to the group, but that number is not fixed. A few more could be added, if needed to round out the group. Another way to include more people would be for each member to choose an alternate, who would attend if the primary member can't be there.

In addition, members are encouraged to bring guests to observe or ask questions. Members who want to bring guests are asked to call Chris Penny in advance, so that attendance isn't too much higher than expected.

Suggested locations for the next meeting are the Lighthouse in Isabel Segunda, which would need to be arranged by the Municipality, or the Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust building in Esperanza.

TRC members were given copies of the Draft Final Community Relations Plan and asked to read it and send Christopher Penny their comments by the next TRC meeting (Attachment 2).

Copies of the Community Relations Plan will be available for public inspection in the public information repositories in Isabel Segunda and Ceiba, PR, at the office of the Vieques Conservation & Historical Trust in Esperanza, and on the NASD public information website (Attachment 2).

This page contains sensitive information which is protected by the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a. To see the page, please contact

Public Affairs Office
NAVFAC Atlantic
6506 Hampton Blvd.
Norfolk, VA 23508-1278

757-322-8005
NFECL_PAO@navy.mil

This page contains sensitive information which is protected by the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a. To see the page, please contact

Public Affairs Office
NAVFAC Atlantic
6506 Hampton Blvd.
Norfolk, VA 23508-1278

757-322-8005
NFECL_PAO@navy.mil