

Major Agreement for Vieques Cleanup Finalized

Posted At : March 26, 2008 6:44 AM | Posted By : Admin

Related Categories: Regulators and Stakeholders

The following article was posted on an [EPA Website](#) related to Vieques.

The EPA announced today the finalization of a federal facility inter-agency agreement (FFA) with several agencies and jurisdictions for the cleanup of portions of the Island of Vieques and its surrounding waters. The agreement is between EPA, the U.S. Department of Navy, U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and it lays out the roles that the various agencies will play as the cleanup continues. EPA's Regional Administrator Alan J. Steinberg was joined by Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy Donald R. Schregardus, as well as Carlos W. López Freytes, President of the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board and Susan Silander, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Project Leader for the Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuge Complex, at EPA's offices in San Juan, Puerto Rico to mark the finalization of the agreement.

"Work has been proceeding at the site, but reaching an agreement with all the parties involved is a significant milestone," said Regional Administrator Steinberg. "The federal government agencies and the Commonwealth are on the same page on how we will move forward, and that will undoubtedly help in cleaning up this site to the benefit of all involved."

The agreement requires that the environmental impacts associated with past and present activities on Vieques and its surrounding waters be thoroughly investigated and that appropriate actions are taken in order to protect the community and the environment. The FFA will facilitate cooperation, exchange of information, and participation of all the parties involved.

"I am encouraged by the progress that has been made on Vieques, and pleased that the key government agencies have come together to sign an agreement that will help us expedite our restoration efforts," said Deputy Assistant Secretary Schregardus. "The agreement identifies roles, responsibilities, processes, and schedules we will follow to protect the people of Vieques and support approved land uses."

Mr. López Freytes said, "The Agreement represents an achievement for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico because it guarantees the involvement of the Environmental Quality Board, as co-regulators, on the decision-making process of the cleanup. Our agency is truly committed to having an active participation in order to ensure that the concerns of the community of Vieques are addressed, the local regulations are followed and the cleanup is fair and comprehensive."

UXO and remnants of exploded ordnance, which contain hazardous substances, have been identified in the former range areas of the eastern portion of the Vieques site, as well as in the surrounding waters. Extensive work has been performed to assess the conditions at the Vieques portion of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Area site as a whole, and the FFA lays out the process for further investigation and cleanup.