



## Restoration of Vieques Island, Puerto Rico

**T**he Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) works with federal and local partners to assist in the cleanup and restoration of Vieques Island, Puerto Rico.

In 2003, the US Navy ceased military operations on Vieques and transferred the majority of their land to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to be managed as a wildlife refuge. The US Navy is now investigating areas it previously occupied to determine the extent of potential contamination. Vieques was recently put on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Priority List.

In fiscal years 2005 and 2006, NOAA received appropriations from Congress to "Consult with and provide assistance to the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Interior (DOI), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in carrying out their responsibilities in cleaning up Vieques, Puerto Rico." NOAA



is working with DOD, DOI, EPA, Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (PR DNER), Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (PR EQB), and the Vieques community to assist with the cleanup and restoration of Vieques. In collaboration with its partners, NOAA has

begun working on the following projects.

### Land and Fiddler Crab Study

NOAA, with assistance from the USFWS and PR DNER, collected and analyzed land and fiddler crabs in June, 2005, to sample for the presence of contamination in land and fiddler crabs. The FWS will use the data to help determine whether selected wildlife refuge areas can be opened to the public for harvesting of land crabs. The data may also be used in the future by the Navy, EPA, and PR EQB as part of human health and ecological risk assessments.

### Marine Habitat Assessment, Restoration, and Protection

NOAA is working with its partners to assess coral and seagrass injuries and develop restoration options. These efforts will build upon previous NOAA projects focused on restoration and protection of Vieques' coastal and marine habitats.



### Underwater Survey

NOAA is planning a limited underwater survey to demonstrate the effectiveness of sonar and video mosaic in identifying ordnance and debris in the waters around Vieques. These data will also better characterize the benthic habitat and will help guide future underwater investigations.

### Education and Outreach

The Vieques Conservation and Historic Trust (Trust) is a non-profit organization concerned with the protection of the unique archeological, physical, and ecological environment of Vieques. The Trust supports a broad array of education programs for the community through lectures, educational exhibits, seminars and computer resources. NOAA partnered with the Trust to develop bilingual education and outreach materials on Vieques' coastal and marine resources. This project enables the Trust to make their exhibits more interactive and self-explanatory for visitors, many of whom are school children. This project also aids in the protection of the coastal and marine resources within Vieques waters by informing the community about the fragility of existing natural resources.

### Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Mapping Project

NOAA continues to compile spatial and environmental data for Vieques, including sensitive species, benthic habitat, nautical charts, and site-specific investigation data. The site is developed in ArcIMS, a web-based application that is easily accessible by the public. When complete, the GIS will assist in the cleanup and restoration of the island, and provide an education tool for the community.

---

*NOAA's Office of Response & Restoration—Protecting our Coastal Environment*

---

**For further information about NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration,  
please visit our Web site at**

**<http://response.restoration.noaa.gov> or call (301) 713-2989.**

