

Congressman Serrano's Vieques Update



Aerial photograph of Western Vieques



View of Yellow Beach



Land Crab



Coral Reef in Vieques



Seagrass at Blue Beach

Congressman Serrano was instrumental in ensuring that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) received an appropriation 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. Through this collaboration, NOAA will be working on the following activities.

Land and Fiddler Crab Sampling Study

Purpose

- To sample for the presence of contamination in land and fiddler crabs.

Sampling

- NOAA, with assistance from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and PR DNER, will collect and analyze land and fiddler crabs in June 2005. NOAA will complete data analysis by the Fall 2005.
- The FWS will use the data to help determine whether selected wildlife refuge areas can be opened to the public to harvesting of land crabs. The land crab data will be provided to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) for a human health evaluation.
- 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

Purpose

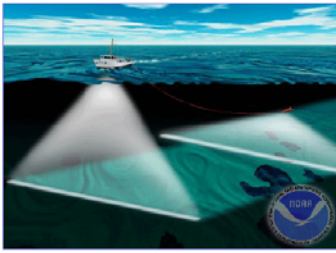
- To assist with the assessment, restoration, and protection of Vieques’ coastal and marine habitats.

Coral

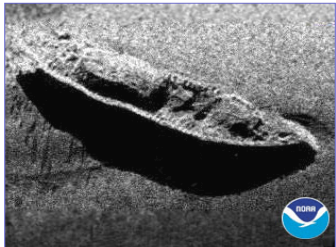
- NOAA is exploring opportunities to work with its’ partners to help protect the coral reefs in Vieques. These efforts will build upon previous NOAA projects focused on the coral reefs around Vieques.

Seagrass

- Seagrass is an important habitat that provides food and shelter for many marine organisms. NOAA will work with its’ partners to assess potential seagrass injuries and develop restoration options.



Hull-mounted multibeam sonar (left) and towed side scan sonar (right)



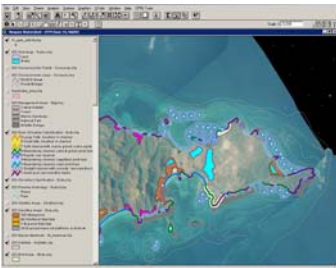
Example of Side scan sonar image (USS Monitor)



Marine Life Exhibit at the Vieques Conservation & Historic Trust



Sea Turtle



Example of data layers for Vieques GIS Project

Underwater Survey

Purpose

- 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. This data will also better characterize the benthic habitat, and will help guide future underwater investigations.

Survey

- To be conducted by NOAA and the University of New Hampshire's (UNH) Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping/Joint Hydrographic Center. The Joint Hydrographic Center is a partnership between NOAA and UNH.

Education and Outreach

Purpose:

- To build upon the existing community education and outreach activities focused on the Vieques coastal and marine resources.

Vieques Conservation and Historic Trust (Trust):

- The 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 will partner with the Trust to develop bilingual education and outreach materials on Vieques' coastal and marine resources. This project will enable the Trust to make their exhibits more interactive and self-explanatory for visitors, many of who are school children.
- This project will aid in the protection of the coastal and marine resources within Vieques waters by informing the community about the existing resources and their fragility.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Mapping Project

Purpose

- To develop a custom GIS mapping project for Vieques to assist in the cleanup and restoration, and provide an education tool for the community.

Vieques GIS Project

- NOAA will compile the existing spatial data for Vieques, including sensitive species, benthic habitat, nautical charts, site-specific investigation data, etc. This custom GIS project provides the ability to view multiple data sets in an easy format.
- To be developed in ArcView and ArcIMS. ArcIMS is a web-based application that is easily accessible to the public.