

Environmental Contaminants Program

Environmental Contaminants Program in the Caribbean

The Environmental Contaminants (EC) program operations are interwoven with all other Service activities. The Caribbean Field Office's Contaminant Biologist regularly works with PR EQB, PR DNER, USVI DPNR, Coast Guard, EPA and other partner to provide expertise in the contaminants field. The Environmental Contaminants Program in the Caribbean covers Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Oils Spills



The Caribbean Field Office Contaminant Specialist coordinates with NOAA, US Coast Guard and local agencies for oil spill response and planning. The CFO is a member of the Caribbean Regional Response Team and both the PR and USVI Area Planning Committee (APC). Through its efforts in the APC, FWS continues to work at a local level to promote readiness and technical expertise with island governments and federal agencies.

Military Munitions



Our Contaminant Specialist works closely with the US Army Corps of Engineers on the removal of unexploded ordnance on the Culebra Island National Wildlife Refuge. Parts of Culebra and the surrounding off shore cays were used for naval gunnery from 1902 to the late 1960's. These off shore cays and several other parts of Culebra now form the Culebra Island National Wildlife Refuge. Coordination with COE and PR Environmental Quality Board and PR DNER regarding future clean up actions continue.



With the transfer of US Navy lands on Vieques in 2001, the Service Contaminant Specialist has been actively involved in the Vieques cleanup. Over 18,000 acres of Vieques were transferred to the Service and now form the largest National Wildlife Refuge in the Caribbean. However, these areas include the former Live Impact Area, Surface Impact Area and Eastern Maneuver Area. The Caribbean Field Office provides technical assistance to EPA, US Navy and PR EQB regarding cleanup levels and priorities. FWS forms part of several Technical Committees and Sub Committees for the Vieques clean up.

Strategies

Pollution is one of the public's greatest environmental concerns. Fish and wildlife resources often signal pollution problems that ultimately affect people and their quality of life. The EC program provides expertise that decision makers can rely on for making sound management decisions with regards to the effects of environmental contaminants on fish and wildlife resources.

Partners

US Coast Guard

NOAA

EPA

Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources

Virgin Island's Division of Fish and Wildlife

USDA Forest Service and International Institute of Tropical Forestry

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

San Juan Bay Estuary Program (SJBE, NGO-EPA sponsored)

Mayagüez Bay Watershed Program (MBWP, NGO-EPA sponsored)

Hydrology for the Environment, Life and Policy, Luquillo Mountains Watershed (HELP)

Program Accomplishments and Activities

The Contaminants program has been operating in the Caribbean since 1981, and its accomplishments include:

Development of Environmental Sensitivity Maps for PR/VI, in conjunction with NOAA, EPA and USCG

Development of Sensitive Area Index for USCG Area Contingency Plan

Participation of Multi-Agency Spill Training in Honduras and Dominican Republic

Participation in Environmental Risk Assessment for Coral Reefs in USVI

Updating Wildlife Annex of the Digital ACP

Future Needs

Both Vieques and Culebra clean up is expected to continue into the near future. This will be a major undertaking and will consume the limited resource of the Caribbean Field Office. EC will continue to respond to oil spills and participate in spill planning with the Caribbean Regional Response Team.

For more information, please contact

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