

6.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

6.1 Scoping, Draft EIS and SDEIS

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement was published in the Federal Register on August 28, 2001 (Appendix A). The NOI was mailed to Federal and State Agencies on September 10, 2001. In addition a Public Notice was issued on September 10, 2001. The Public Notice was mailed to all entities listed on the mailing list of Public Notices for Puerto Rico. The Public Notice was also published on September 26, 2001 on the El Nuevo Día and El Vocero de Puerto Rico newspapers.

A scoping meeting was held with Federal and State agencies on October 3, 2001, and a public scoping meeting was conducted on November 1, 2001. At the public scoping meeting, 101 people attended and registered 87 comments. Copies of the NOI, Public Notices, comment letters received during the scoping process and transcripts from the scoping meetings are included in Appendix A. A table summarizing all the comments or issues raised during the scoping meetings is also presented in this appendix.

On September 20, 2002, the USACE published in the Federal Register a Notice of Availability of the DEIS, including a notice of a 60-day period to provide comments to the document. Numerous comments were received from federal and Commonwealth agencies, as well as from citizens and private organizations. In response to these comments and further review of the elements of the Project and the potential environmental impacts from the proposed action, the Applicant proposed modifications to the original scope. The modifications included limiting the Project to the Ponce Bay area and eliminating all the elements within the Guayanilla Bay area. These changes in the Project prompted the USACE to publish a Notice of Intent to prepare a Supplemental DEIS (SDEIS). This notice was published in the Federal Register on December 30, 2002. Also, a Public Notice was issued on January 17, 2003. On February 20, 2003, another Public Notice was issued extending the comment period.

6.2 Agency Coordination

During April 2001, the Applicant held several meetings with the mayors and other officials of the municipalities of Guayanilla, Peñuelas and Ponce, as well as Commonwealth of Puerto Rico agencies, including AFI, the GDB and PRIDCO. The purpose of these meetings was both to inform and coordinate efforts regarding the planning of the Project, and the development of the SDEIS.

On April 4, 2001, the Applicant held a preliminary interagency meeting with representatives of the local and federal regulatory agencies to discuss the proposed action. The following Federal and Commonwealth agencies participated in this meeting: Puerto Rico Government Development Bank (GDB); the Municipality of Ponce (Ponce), the Puerto Rico Planning Board (PRPB); the Puerto Rico Power and Energy Authority (PREPA); the Permits and Regulations Administration (ARPE); the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (EQB); the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER); the Office of the Governor; USFWS; USGS; USNMFS; USEPA; and the USACE.

On October 3, 2001, the USACE held the Interagency Scoping Meeting with representatives of the local and Federal regulatory agencies to discuss the scope of the SDEIS and the environmental permits needed for the Project. The following Federal and Commonwealth

agencies participated in the Scoping Meeting: US Coast Guard, State Historical Preservation Office, Puerto Rico Government Development Bank (GDB), Municipality of Ponce, Puerto Rico Planning Board (PRPB), Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER), USNMFS, USEPA, USGS, and USFWS. A Public Meeting at the Municipality of Ponce followed on November 1, 2001 to further discuss the scope of the Project and to gather comments from the public.

On March 5, 2003, the Applicant held meetings with both local and Federal resource agencies to further discuss design details on the proposed action. Additional meetings were held on this subject on May 14, 2003 and July 9, 2003.

6.3 List of Statement Recipients of SDEIS

A circulation list for the SDEIS appears in Chapter 7, which includes elected officials, Federal agencies, Commonwealth agencies, municipalities, and public and private organizations. The SDEIS will also be made available to the interested parties. A copy of the SDEIS is available on the Internet at http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/permit/hot_topics/POAEIS/content.htm .

6.4 Response to Comments

Comments received from public and private entities and the general public will be addressed in the Final EIS and included as an appendix to the document.

6.5 Circulation of the Final EIS

The FEIS will be circulated to Federal, Commonwealth and local agencies and all interested parties including those organization or citizen who provide comments on the SDEIS. It will available for public review at several locations. A copy of the FEIS will be published on the Internet at the following USACE page:

http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/permit/hot_topics/POAEIS/content.htm .

Following completion of the comment period on the FEIS, the USACE will issue a Record of Decision (ROD).